

# COOL CALM KIDS



**Resources to help  
Prep to Year 2 students  
find better ways to deal  
conflict and bossy peers**

**Amelia Suckling  
and Carla Temple**

# COOL CALM KIDS

Resources to help Prep to Year 2  
students find better ways to deal  
with conflict and bossy peers

**Amelia Suckling and Carla Temple**

**Illustrated by Christina Miesen**

First published 2008  
by ACER Press, an imprint of  
Australian Council for Educational Research Ltd  
19 Prospect Hill Road, Camberwell  
Victoria, 3124, Australia

www.acerpress.com.au  
sales@acer.edu.au

Text © Amelia Suckling and Carla Temple 2008  
Design and typography © ACER Press 2008

This book is copyright. All rights reserved. Except under the conditions described in the *Copyright Act 1968* of Australia and subsequent amendments, and any exceptions permitted under the current statutory licence scheme administered by Copyright Agency Limited (www.copyright.com.au), no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, transmitted, broadcast or communicated in any form or by any means, optical, digital, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the written permission of the publisher.

#### **Copying of the blackline master pages**

The purchasing educational institution and its staff are permitted to make copies of the pages marked as blackline master pages, beyond their rights under the *Act*, provided that:

1. the number of copies does not exceed the number reasonably required by the educational institution to satisfy its teaching purposes;
2. copies are made only by reprographic means (photocopying), not by electronic/digital means, and not stored or transmitted;
3. copies are not sold or lent; and
4. every copy made clearly shows the footnote  
(e.g. 'Copyright © Suckling and Temple 2008').

For those pages not marked as blackline masters pages the normal copying limits in the *Act*, as described above, apply.

Edited by Susannah Burgess  
Cover and text design by Bob Dog Pty Ltd  
Typeset by Bob Dog Pty Ltd  
Cover illustration and internal illustrations by Christina Miesen  
Printed in Australia by BPA Print Group

National Library of Australia Cataloguing-in-Publication data:

Author: Suckling, Amelia.  
Title: Cool calm kids : resources to help prep to year 2 students find better ways to deal with conflict and bossy peers / authors, Amelia Suckling, Carla Temple.  
Publisher: Camberwell, Vic. : ACER Press, 2008.  
ISBN: 9780864318480 (pbk.)  
Notes: Bibliography.  
Subjects: Conflict management—Study and teaching.  
Self-control in children—Study and teaching.  
Social skills in children—Study and teaching.  
Interpersonal conflict in children.  
Interpersonal relations in children.  
Child psychology.  
Bullying—Prevention.  
Other Authors/Contributors: Temple, Carla.  
Dewey Number: 303.6907

# Foreword

Some ten years ago, two bright and bubbly young ladies came to a workshop I was giving for the Australian Council for Educational Research in Melbourne. I was then, as now, a university research professor and saw my role largely as one who pours out facts and figures about what had been discovered in the new, emerging field of school-based bullying. What became of the attendees I do not know, apart that is from the two young women, Amelia Suckling and Carla Temple, whom I later discovered to be Victorian primary school teachers. They went on to supersede me as workshop presenters and to write a splendid and lively book for school teachers called *Bullying: A whole-school approach*. I am happy now to introduce their second book, *Cool Calm Kids*, one that further fulfils their goal of making what is understood about children's social behaviour and difficulties with peers accessible to classroom teachers, in a highly readable and practical way.

This new book is based upon the premise that the socially unskilled child is highly vulnerable at school. Such a child finds school to be a stressful and even dangerous place. The aim of this book is to help teachers—and parents too—to develop in children the necessary social skills to survive and thrive in such an environment.

But what is social skill? It has been conceived by some as the capacity to interact with others in order to reach desired goals. But consider. Defined in that way it may logically refer to the activities of the mythical used-car salesman selling you a shonky car. Or to any unscrupulous activity that enables people to get what they happen to want. So, we must refine the definition to refer to what may be called 'desirable social goals'; that is, goals that reflect desirable or good social values. This is especially fitting when we are concerned with the moral development of children, for the teaching of desirable values to children is a necessary and integral part of what teachers and parents must do. Among these values we must place both respect for self and respect for others.

These values, respect for self and for others, commonly do not come naturally to children without the help and guidance of adults. Sadly, the desire to dominate and threaten others is present from time to time in practically all of us, not only in children, and it is the duty of those who care for children to help them to curb this tendency. As Amelia and Carla put it, we must help children to learn how not to rage like alligators. There are other, much better ways of behaving.

Likewise, there are children—as there are adults—who do not appear to respect themselves. These people become mouse-like when they are intimidated and do not stand up for their rights, the most basic of which is to be let alone when one is doing no harm to anyone.

How can the development of social skills help such children? In answering this question, the authors suggest that teachers—and parents too—should recognise a central component of the kind of social skill that children need at school; namely, the capacity to be imperturbable, or (as they put it ) to be ‘cool, calm kids’, even in the most trying conditions.

This is, of course, easier said than done. Each of us has an autonomic nervous system which has developed through our long evolutionary history as a kind of survival mechanism. Our bodies tell us to fight when we are attacked or to take flight when we think we cannot win. It is a small step to attacking those we think we can successfully attack—pre-emptively perhaps—to deter others from attacking us. Hence the familiar pecking order we see developing among children in the schoolyard, as among chickens in the farmyard. Hence the dismal triumphalism of the school bully or the cock of the walk and the abject misery of the hapless one who withdraws, becomes isolated and dies within.

Can this all too familiar scenario be changed? Amelia and Carla believe that it can. They fully recognise the difficulties. They note, for instance, that children of different ages need to be helped according to their unique developmental stage. The nine year old is crucially different from the five year old, being emotionally and cognitively more advanced and needs to be helped in a different way. But regardless of age and maturity, each needs to learn the vital lesson—to be cool and to be calm—if they are to escape the fate of the raging alligator or the timorous mouse.

Like their previous contribution to teacher education on school bullying, the strong appeal of this book lies in the series of brilliantly conceived exercises and ideas that teachers can use to help children to relate peaceably and constructively with their peers: to be self-controlled yet appropriately assertive, and to seek help from adults only when they need to do so. There is a real hope that books such as this—and pre-eminently this one written by Carla and Amelia—will help us to help children to develop into responsive and responsible adults, equally free from the compulsion to rage or the compulsion to cower.

Ken Rigby  
Adjunct Research Professor, School of Education  
University of South Australia

# Contents

<i>Acknowledgments</i>	<b>vi</b>
<i>Introduction</i>	<b>vii</b>
<b>Part One: Building understanding</b>	<b>1</b>
Chapter 1 Snapshot of the child from four to seven years	<b>3</b>
Chapter 2 Building social capital in the classroom	<b>8</b>
Chapter 3 Support plan—assessing and managing peer conflict	<b>11</b>
Chapter 4 Tips for parents	<b>18</b>
<b>Part Two: Putting it into practice</b>	<b>23</b>
Lesson 1 Great mates and mean mates	<b>25</b>
Lesson 2 We all have feelings	<b>29</b>
Lesson 3 Reactions: Angry Alligator and Scared Mouse	<b>33</b>
Lesson 4 Be a Cool Calm Kid	<b>38</b>
Lesson 5 My Safety Shield and self-talk	<b>42</b>
Lesson 6 Robot Voice	<b>46</b>
Lesson 7 Three Step Telling Rule	<b>50</b>
Lesson 8 Asking an adult for help	<b>54</b>
Lesson 9 The Rap of the Cool Calm Kid	<b>57</b>
<b>Appendices</b>	<b>61</b>
Poster 1 Angry Alligator	<b>63</b>
Poster 2 Scared Mouse	<b>64</b>
Poster 3 Cool Calm Kid	<b>65</b>
Poster 4 Three Step Telling Rule	<b>66</b>
Certificates	<b>67</b>
Bibliography	<b>69</b>



# Acknowledgments

There are many people we would like to thank for their help and generosity in bringing *Cool Calm Kids* to fruition.

To the hundreds of primary school teachers who clearly articulated the need to have something in print that helps them deal with the relentless demands of supporting young children to manage the complexities of making, maintaining and managing friendships.

To our team of professionals: Ann Van Leerdam, Gordon Briddock, Cameron Semmens and Kristie Molnar who present the *Cool Calm Kids* workshops for five to eight year olds with such fun, energy, enthusiasm and flair.

To Monica Varga who listened thoughtfully and guided gently so that our ideas would be practical and accessible for young children and busy teachers.

To Cameron Semmens, word wizard extraordinaire who wrote ‘The Rap of the Cool Calm Kid’ with clarity, insight and a great sense of fun.

To ACER for demonstrating that, through the publication of this book, it is never too early to educate our children to manage conflict in non-violent ways. Thanks to Maureen O’Keefe, the Project Editor who kept the book moving, attending to all the particulars.

To Christina Miesen for her gorgeous illustrations that capture so genuinely the young child’s spirit.

And many thanks to our respective families and husbands: Terry and Doug and collective sons, Liam, Aymon, Max and Casey for always being our cheerleaders. Our drive would not be possible without their love, encouragement and enthusiasm.



# Introduction

The journey involved in actively participating in school life can be both daunting and exciting for the young child. There are so many friends to make, maintain and enjoy; so much to learn; and so much to do. The hope of both parents and teachers is for the young child to engage in school life without too many hurts. As teachers we wish we could protect them from the upsets and frustration they experience with their academic and social learning but know that this is unrealistic.

The best we can do is to resource children with a repertoire of pro-social skills and emotional learning, immerse them in a social climate that fosters healthy relationships and involve them in work that is stimulating, creative and engaging. The underlying feeling may be to rescue them when problems with peers and school work arise but we know that rescuing strips children of the personal resources they need to develop resilience and be free of victim thinking. The journey that develops resilience starts early and the earlier the better.

From our personal experience as teachers and listening to teachers today, we know that supporting young children as they deal with peer conflict in pro-social ways is a never-ending and exhausting task. We have thus felt compelled and inspired to write *Cool Calm Kids* to support teachers in nurturing social and emotional competencies in the young children they teach.

*Cool Calm Kids* began as an energetic and practical workshop created for students aged five to eight years to assist them in standing up for themselves. The feedback from teachers at the completion of our workshops was that there is a need to put in print what is a complex issue—that is, young children managing bossy peers in a cool calm way. The issue needs to be put into concepts, language and visuals that are fun, accessible and non-threatening for the very young. The focus therefore throughout the book is to ‘keep it simple’, which at times is a complex task.

## Rationale

As educators we recognise that schools are the social context by which children learn, and it is the social context that creates the learning environment in the classroom. To promote a healthy social climate schools have broadened the curriculum to include the child’s social and emotional learning as well as their academic learning. The need to address social and emotional learning is becoming more important as several authors have argued that: ‘In modern western societies wherein individualism is highly valued, children are at risk of compromised empathy development’ (George, 1999; Gullone, 2000 in Thompson & Gullone, 2003). The child’s ability to empathise and share their



feelings is the foundation for successful social interaction and healthy relationship building (Warden & Christie 1997).

*Cool Calm Kids* supports teachers in the development of pro-social behaviour in young children. Research shows that social skills programs that are introduced to young children are more likely to be effective (Dryfoos 1990; Durlack & Wells 1997; Greenberg et al. 2001; Greenberg et al. 2003; Grossman et al. 2001 in McGrath & Noble 2006).

Freed and Whitworth (2003) further highlight the importance of teaching pro-social behaviour by drawing on current research that tells us that 15 per cent of children in primary school have social and/or emotional problems that impact on their ability to form friendships.

## How to use this book

Our intention throughout the book is to make the format user-friendly and the content accessible and understandable for young children between the ages of five to eight.

**Part One** is relevant information teachers require to construct an understanding regarding the new skills their students will learn. The final chapter in this section is specifically geared for parents. There are five photocopiable pages that will provide parents with tips and strategies to support their child as he or she deals with conflict and bossy peers in non-violent ways that are aligned with the ethos of the school.

**Part Two** is specifically geared for young children. It contains nine lessons and each one includes:

- **background information** that provides the necessary knowledge to support the teacher in lesson preparation and delivery.
- **the purpose of the lesson** and **learning outcomes** that indicate the skills and understanding that children gain on completing the lesson.
- **requirements for the lesson** that list the activity sheets and posters needed to deliver the lesson.
- **activities** that provide a variety of tasks from which a selection can be made to cater for children who are non-readers through to readers; the activities therefore range in difficulty. Select the activities that best suit the needs of your students. We encourage you to modify the activity sheets if necessary or consider having non-readers pair up with an older buddy for support.
- **coaching tips** that provide helpful hints and reminders for the teacher.

The **appendix** provides support material such as:

- posters that can be enlarged
- photocopiable certificates for students.

**Prompt language** offers a catchy slogan at the end of each lesson to help children remember the new skills they have learnt.

We have been mindful not to use the terms ‘bully’ or ‘bullying’. Globally there is no one agreed definition amongst the experts because of the complexity of the

behaviour hence the term we have used throughout the book is bossy peers and bossy behaviour. The term ‘bullying’ incites much emotion from parents and possibly leads to an inaccurate assessment of the child’s account of the incident. It is common for young children to overuse and/or incorrectly use this term. The focus, ‘dealing with bossy peers’ as used in the book is more inclusive and perhaps more realistic when dealing with young children in the early years of primary school.

To deny that bullying occurs amongst young children in kindergarten and early primary school would be incorrect. Rigby (2002a) states that empirical studies in a number of countries indicate that some young children intentionally and repeatedly engage in aggressive and manipulative behaviour towards less powerful peers (Alsaker & Valkanover 2000; Koechenderfer & Ladd 1996; Main 1999).

## Aims

Our overall aim is to help young children explore non-violent ways to handle conflict and bossy peers. We aim to nurture a sense of empathy and the ability to follow through with behaviour that is safe and inclusive.

By equipping children with a repertoire of self-management tools we aim to build resilience and the beginnings of self-reliance where the conflict they experience is character building rather than soul destroying.

## Outcomes for children

Children will learn:

- how to distinguish between fair and unfair play
- how to deal with teasing and bossy peers
- how to be a cool calm kid and to react positively by managing their personal power
- how to build body language awareness
- how to solve conflict with their words.

## Benefits for teachers

Teachers benefit by being able to share in a common language and being able to support students as they learn a repertoire of non-violent strategies to deal with bossy peers that is aligned with the ethos of the school.

## Considerations

Allow time to consider how you will implement and maintain the program. There is no one perfect program to teach social skills. A multi-faceted approach is necessary.

Consider how *Cool Calm Kids* can complement existing programs in your school. Where possible take on a whole school approach as this helps to build a shared common language of the new skills learnt.

How children perceive their teacher has a lasting impact. Be mindful how you model your personal power by the tone of voice used, body language gesturing and verbal language. These are strong messages that children observe and often repeat.

Create a climate in the classroom where children feel safe, supported and included. This gives children the confidence to apply their new skills and build healthy relationships.

## Teaching the new skills

Teaching pro-social skills is not a one-off lesson. Social skills are not taught via osmosis but rather require explicit and repeated teaching. Teachers will see better results if they adopt the following six steps below.

- 1 Describe the skill being taught.
- 2 Demonstrate the skill.
- 3 Rehearse the skill with the children.
- 4 Offer feedback to children on their rehearsal of the skill.
- 5 Create opportunities in the classroom and the playground for children to apply the skill.
- 6 Reinforce and affirm the children when they apply the skill and fine tune where necessary.

We wish you and your school community all the best as you continue to gather the energy and inspiration to be an inspiring role-model for the young children you teach.

Please note some of the material in reference to the definitions is drawn from our self-published booklet, *Bully-Busters® Parent Handbook* revised edition 2005.



*part one*

# Building understanding



# Snapshot of the child from four to seven years

This book is geared for children in the early years of primary school. It is important to keep in mind when reading the snapshots below that not all children reach the different stages of development at the age level specified and their entry into some stages may be more gradual.

## Snapshot of the four year old

Children develop many skills while they are four and progress significantly in thinking, ability and understanding. It is obvious that they speak more clearly and fluently, and follow directions well. They have become better coordinated and take on many new physical tasks. They can remember longer rhymes, raps, songs and can accompany these with actions.

They begin to manage larger groups and become more capable in playing in small groups in a cooperative manner. They still engage in independent play and parallel play, however their awareness of others and their ability to play in cooperation begins to increase. This is referred to as complementary play. They often think out aloud as they play, and can be heard speaking in character voices as their make-believe characters engage with other toys. This external thinking helps guide the young child's action until they develop silent thinking later on.

Four year olds are capable of using their imagination and think about things they haven't experienced. They enjoy open-ended questions that require more than a single word answer as they usually understand many more words than they currently use. It is easier for the four year old to answer *what*, *who*, *when* questions than *how* questions as it can require higher order thinking. *Why* questions can also be difficult as it demands reason and cause and effect.

They begin to demand and use a wider vocabulary as they need words to understand and process what others are saying, and to express their feelings and ideas in various ways. Although their cognitive ability is increasing, as is their vocabulary, they need clear verbal instructions matched with appropriate actions. For example the teacher may say and demonstrate how she wants things put away before the art session begins: ‘See, I’m washing my paint brush under cold water until the water runs clear then wiping it with this towel and putting it back in this container.’ This matches their thinking-aloud stage and enables them to complete a process with less frustration.

## Needs of the four year old

This age level still needs and enjoys choosing its activities and working in small groups. They can come together in a large group once or twice a day—perhaps to listen to a story, sing or recite raps and rhymes but usually for no longer than twenty minutes.

Four year olds respond well to structure and need to learn to predict and anticipate when an activity is about to end. This can be done by giving a gentle, clear countdown, such as: ‘Looks like you are doing a great job with that activity, but it’s nearly time to pack that up.’ Whenever possible allow the child to complete the task they are doing and then move on to the next activity to avoid unnecessary frustration.

Although four year olds are out of the stage of throwing tantrums they certainly still get upset and frustrated. They need adult support to help them listen to the point of view of others, be aware of the feelings of others, and begin to learn how their behaviour has an affect on those around them. To diffuse this and to enable the child to see that their behaviour is socially unacceptable, remove the child from the group and find a quiet safe place to calmly and simply talk through their upset. When the child feels calm help them rejoin the group without making a fuss. Remember to reinforce their positive behaviour by giving eye contact and words of praise as soon as you see them playing in an acceptable manner.

Above all the four year old is in need of support to prepare for school. This is not achieved by pushing them to read, write, add up and complete worksheets—although many parents may be impressed by this. The child thrives best by being in a safe structured, predictable environment that has a healthy balance between self-directed and teacher-directed activities and exposure to stories, drama, music, singing and movement.

## Snapshot of the five year old

Most five year olds have made the leap to school and are now spending time in a large group. Many are excited about the learning and begin to relate and identify with friends while for others, moving from a smaller, safer, more familiar setting to school can be a daunting transition. Overall their independence is growing as they are more able to think ahead and plan small projects and activities.

They start to develop special friends and become more selective about who they play with and who they exclude. The issue of sharing becomes paramount at this age. Thompson, O'Neill Grace and Cohen (2001) believe that in order for this age group to coordinate play between two friends they have to be willing to give up their individual greediness, neediness and desire to control in order to collaborate. The five year old is able to move out of self-absorption and enter into mutual play. They begin to discover that playing with others is more fun and allows for further creative play ideas than when playing alone. This is supported by their increasing language skills and awareness of others as they can make comments such as: 'Wow! Your blocks look great. Let's add another block to that and see what happens.' This is further supported as the child, according to Thompson, O'Neill Grace and Cohen (2001), is more able to enter a *play plateau*, which is a mutually agreed space that does not completely belong to either child.

The five year old begins to use many more words in everyday conversation, enjoy using new words and speak in longer, more structured sentences. Their academic knowledge is developing as they are able to write their own name as well as identify and write some letters of the alphabet and count to twenty and above.

The five year old has a greater sense of justice and what is fair. As a result teachers often have to listen to what seems a litany of tales that appear to be unimportant but are serious and concerning to the child. Helping children distinguish between telling tales and reporting something serious needs much patience and explanation.

## Needs of the five year old

Success for five year olds in school is strongly influenced by their language skills so they can effectively engage and negotiate with their peers. They require conversation and opportunities to develop social skills and learning that will help them control their feelings. Children need to be provided with a bank of feeling words because although their language concepts, constructs and vocabulary have increased, many still have difficulty working out problems by talking them through. When children are resourced with a bank of feeling words (I feel scared, upset, annoyed, angry, worried, confused and so on), they can more easily articulate and explain their upset state and thus have their needs met more successfully. Congratulate the child for their attempt to express themselves and reassure them that the problem has been understood. They don't need a lengthy sermon when their behaviour is inappropriate. They respond well to clear instructions, behaviour rehearsal and positive modelling from the teacher.

Patience is not a virtue of this age group as they often complain about group size, someone sitting too close, someone pushing in front, that they can't see, and they often interrupt their teacher by sharing irrelevant information or by talking to children beside them unaware of the task at hand. This further reinforces the importance of limiting large group activities. They are still in need of small group activities where for part of the day they are able to work and play in self-directed activities or teacher-directed activities.



## Snapshot of the six and seven year olds

This age group is well into interactive play. They enjoy playing games in small groups and larger groups. They are more capable of being patient, waiting for their turn and cooperating with others while they have their turn. They become far more aware of others as they observe how their friends behave and interact. They have developed a wider range of self-regulation skills. This enables them to be more sensitive to the social contextual cues that serve to guide their behaviour and to express or control negative emotions in socially appropriate ways.

According to Piaget this age group can perform logical operations, but only in relation to concrete external objects rather than ideas. They can add, subtract, count, measure and begin to understand the conservation of mass, length, area, weight, time and volume. They can sort items into categories, reverse the direction of their thinking and think about two concepts at once. They also begin to shed their egocentric focus, enabling them to understand a situation from another person's point of view.

## Needs of the six and seven year olds

This age group have developed a wide range of social skills, however much reinforcement and practice both formally and informally is required. Their display of empathy increases as they have emerged from the egocentric state and begin to appreciate the emotional state of others. At the same time they realise that understanding the emotional state of others is not that simple. They need consistent behavioural limits and someone who can demonstrate genuine concern for others and ask the right questions to further assist them in developing the skills of empathy.

## Practical tips to create calm in the classroom

No matter what the age of the child, it is important in teaching not to overlook the workings of the classroom. That is, the simple rules that keep the tone of the room feeling safe, organised and socially connected. Overlooking the basics can unwittingly create a social climate of chaos and unrest in the students.

The effective teacher understands that prevention is better than intervention and is constantly observing the social dynamic and the practical organisational functions in the classroom to ensure problems don't escalate.

Below are some tips:

- Provide children with the language to engage them socially.  
Please and thank you. Can you show me? Can I have a turn? It's your turn now. Can I share that with you? Excuse me, I'm sorry for...
- Use the child's name and give eye contact when speaking to them and insist they do the same.
- Set clear simple class rules together.
- Enforce rules by gently reminding.

- Praise children when they are adhering to the rules.
- Ensure there is an adequate amount of equipment and toys for children to use to avoid fighting and impatience.
- Avoid children waiting with nothing to do.
- Avoid clutter, as this can create confusion.
- Label storage containers and insist that everything is put away on completion of a task.
- Have storage in safe reach.
- Avoid glare from whiteboards and children facing windows as this may create frustration and limit visual acuity.
- Ensure writing is clear and large enough for all children to see.
- Avoid rushed pack-ups as this creates chaos and unrest.
- Provide a safe space in the classroom where a child can calm down.
- When a child has cooled down and re-enters the group calmly and clearly state your expectation and assistance to re-enter.
- Listen as children share their interests with you as this reassures them you care and assists in building a profile. For example, 'Casey enjoys camping and bike riding.'
- Insist on respect for self, others and property.

## Building social capital in the classroom

Many young children come to school with the expectation that they will have friends to play with and possibly a best friend. Many parents also share this expectation for their children with excitement and enthusiasm.

Let us attempt to understand the complexity and benefits of friendships. It is acknowledged that we all need friends regardless of our age and nurturing positive healthy friendships takes time, energy and commitment. Herron and Peter (1998) believe that the source of hope and happiness in our lives is based on having friends; however making and maintaining them is an ability that varies in all individuals.

Young children have not yet learned the necessary skills, graces and vocabulary to foster healthy friendships. They are keen to have 'best friend' status but do not realise how quickly and easily this can be shaken simply by their words, actions and tone of voice. Teachers recognise that the negotiations between and amongst friends is demanding and time intensive. The nature of who is playing with who, who owns the best friend, the complexities of trios, and the new kid on the block all have their own politics that teachers may not be aware of.

Developing and maintaining friendships teaches many skills and helps children learn who they are and how they are in the world. Having a friend teaches one to be sensitive, empathic and provides a sense of security to take on the new. When a child knows that they come to school and have friends to play with in the classroom and on the playground their level of engagement and sense of belonging and connectedness is enhanced. Research now tells us that students' social and emotional learning is crucial for academic success (Zins, Weissberg, Wang & Walberg 2004 in Noble & McGrath 2006).

Teachers need to be attentive to the child who is socially isolated and camouflages this by walking around with a teacher on yard duty every day or says they like to read at lunchtime. Keep in mind that these children are affected by their lack of friendship and do not have the social competencies to change their status. We do not

want these children to continue using management strategies that avoid connection with their peers.

The best way for children to learn about the ups and downs of friendships is to experience them and deal with all the joys, hurts and upsets that friendship brings. The teacher's role in this development is twofold. Teachers need to equip children with the social skills to manage their social and emotional learning and socially engineer the environment to ensure that healthy friendships are fostered where social inclusion becomes the norm and risky, negative behaviours are minimised.

To do this successfully teachers need to operate from the notion of strategic intent. It is a continuous process to observe and assess the power dynamic: why this occurs and how this can be nurtured to create inclusion and healthy friendship building.

Setting students up for success both socially and academically by preparing the environment and teaching clear, explicit social skills is not an easy task. As teachers we want to create an environment where young children can begin to understand that:

- friendships have beginnings and endings
- friends are not forever
- conflict within friendships is normal; it is how we choose to deal with the conflict that matters
- one cannot own a friend
- developing a best friend is not about exclusivity
- friends are allowed to move in and out of social groups
- they grow and change and so do their friends
- what friends say and do, and how they say it and do it, has consequences
- it is the quality of the friendship that matters not the quantity.

As teachers we need to acknowledge that children's skill acquisition, whether social/emotional or academic learning, travels at different rates. Some children acquire new skills by simple observation and others may require countless repetition and rehearsal. Having continued faith and abundant energy are helpful tools.

A teacher willingly shared with us a personal experience that occurred over thirty years ago when she was in Year Two at primary school. Her memory was clear and her feelings and emotions about the issue were vivid and detailed.

In Year Two, it was hell. I hated going to school because another girl stole my best friend and told everyone not to let me play. They teased me and bossed me around making me do things I didn't want to do in order to play. In Year Three it all changed, my new teacher made me a hero. I went from the bottom of the social pecking order to someone who kids wanted to play with and liked. It didn't last for a week; it was like that for all of Year Three and the years that followed.

We have heard this story many times, shared in different ways by teachers, parents and students. When asked why and how their teachers made them a hero their answers were strikingly similar. Teachers acted with social intent making the classroom environment a high priority for successful learning in every capacity. More specifically they highlighted the abilities and talents of the unpopular child to help them move up the social hierarchy. These teachers not only taught the social and emotional skills

necessary but also sought opportunities to reduce competitive status amongst children by fostering inclusion in fun and creative ways. Thompson, O'Neill Grace and Cohen (2001) believe that when teachers act with strategic intent children's lives can be changed.

Children cannot deal with intense and prolonged conflict on their own. It is becoming more evident that teachers have a responsibility to build social capital in their classroom by equipping children with the thinking and skills necessary to deal with the conflicts, challenges and unpredictability of today's rapidly changing world. 'To thrive in the very different circumstances of today, we need to develop schools that will nurture people's capacity to connect with each other and make sense of the information that is available to them' (*Antidote*, 2003). Teachers are in a position of influence and are agents of social change by the nature of their profession and the extent of time they spend with children.

Teachers build social capital best when they:

- build teacher–student connectedness
- educate early
- take on a seize-the-moment approach with children when acquiring and applying new social/emotional skills
- adopt a whole school approach
- involve parents and the broader community where possible
- acknowledge that in some situations children and their parents cannot solve friendship problems alone
- act with strategic intent
- socially engineer the environment to set children up for success and build connectedness
- teach a repertoire of social competencies to help children manage their personal power relevant to the child's age and experience
- frequently rehearse new social skills and explore when to apply them
- make helpfulness and inclusion of a higher status than manipulation and exclusion
- focus on changing the social climate as this empowers the individual
- know effective and sustained change occurs when the focus is the social climate not the individual child.

When teachers are mindful of building social capital in their classroom they empower the child to believe they are a 'hero' and they create a social climate that maintains the child's new status without the risk of limiting or damaging other children in their class.

# Support plan— assessing and managing peer conflict

For a variety of reasons some children are reluctant to share the hurts and upsets they experience with their peers. As teachers we need to create an environment where young children feel it is safe to talk. Children will feel more comfortable and confident in doing this if teachers listen empathically, act promptly and teach and encourage self-help behaviour.

Some children will require a support plan if the conflict has been serious and persistent. Designing a support plan for the child requires a systematic approach to ensure that the problem has been carefully assessed and that appropriate strategies are implemented that are sustainable and effective. There is no quick fix solution or single magic strategy. For effective long-term change to occur the teacher is required to work through a series of steps listed below.

## 1 Assess the conflict

To assess the problem teachers will need to consider the questions below.

- Frequency: How often does the conflict occur?
- Extent of time: How long has the conflict been going on?
- Child's level of distress: How does the conflict make the child feel?
- Child's current management: How has the child been managing the conflict?
- Social context: Who is involved? Where does it happen? What has been happening?

## 2 Design the plan

A support plan is more effective for the child when the teacher tackles the problem on two fronts: a) engineer the social environment to set the child up for success and, b) teach the child the necessary social skills they require to deal with the conflict.

### a) Engineer the child's social environment

#### **Provide protection**

If a child feels too afraid to negotiate the playground alone provide protection as a short-term strategy while other strategies are being formulated. The child may feel it is safe to walk around with the teacher on yard duty, play in view of the staffroom or be involved in a lunchtime club that is supervised by a teacher.

#### **Provide a buddy**

Offering peer support in the form of a playtime buddy can be a great source of comfort for the child. Select a buddy who is willing to take on this role, and who has better developed social skills and social kudos. Changing buddies regularly avoids the possibility of them becoming resentful for feeling overly responsible for their buddy.

#### **Teacher mentor**

Provide the child with the opportunity to have a teacher mentor available if and when he or she feels worried or upset. This may be a specialist teacher, class teacher or favourite teacher from previous years.

#### **Locate safe places**

Some children have difficulty working out where there are safe places to play. The teacher may need to walk around the playground with the child showing ideal places to play and possible games to play in that area.

#### **Locate exits**

Some children may be visually and spatially challenged and cannot see that they have cornered themselves in an unsafe place to play. Discuss with the child that it is acceptable to remove themselves from uncomfortable situations, and help the child make a visual map in their mind of where the exits are located and how to best exit from a given space or group.

#### **Three tier lunch**

(Devised by Marcella Reiter)

The three tier lunch is a time management structure that helps children with social and/or emotional needs manage the playground. Lunchtime is divided into approximately three equal portions of time.

The First third the student engages in set structured activities such as board games, sporting activities, gardening and so on. These activities should be in view of a teacher and be enjoyed by the child.

The Second third the student has free time and participates in an activity of his or her choice.

The Final third the student engages in a structured activity—either a new activity or a continuation of the First third.

When the child is better able to handle the playground the format can be changed. First third is a time for free play, Second third is a time for a structured activity and the Final third is back to free play. When the teacher feels that the child is ready to manage the playground the child resumes full lunchtime play of his or her choice (Suckling & Temple 2001).

### **Classroom seating**

Classroom seating is a powerful tool that can significantly affect the child. Consider placement in terms of the physical position in the classroom followed by seating the child next to positive role models that offer support.

### **Cooperative learning**

Cooperative learning allows the child to practise pro-social values and social skills by fostering student interactions: ‘It is vital that we apprentice young people into the thinking, the talking and the doing associated with true collaboration from the moment they enter school.’ (Murdoch & Wilson 2004)

### **Inclusive games**

Inclusive games foster positive interdependence because the activity cannot take place unless everyone is engaged. This helps build connectedness through fun. It also provides the child with a way of learning and practising cooperative skills—made easier if the instructions are clear and explicit from the teacher. The teacher may wish to teach one inclusive game per week, offering rewards for groups who play the new game during lunchtime.

### **Teachers as role models**

Research confirms that the impact on student academic success and wellbeing can be dependent on their academic learning as well as their social and emotional learning. Kathleen Cotton in her 1995 research update (Stanley & McGrath in McGrath & Noble 2006) believes the ability of the teacher to encourage respect and build awareness of others’ feelings enhances school effectiveness. When teachers demonstrate care, inclusion and acceptance, this has a positive effect on students.

## **b) Teach the child the social skills required**

School is the place where children are constantly required to share, take turns, wait, compromise, accept feedback from the teacher, interact and converse with others. Often it is expected that they can do this well but reality tells us that this is often not the case. Children need support and direct teaching to be able to negotiate and handle the social expectations placed upon them. Below is a list of social skills to support the child, many of which are covered in the proceeding lessons. These are:



- Body language awareness and tone of voice (lessons 3 and 4)
- Self-talk (lesson 5)
- Creative visualisation of Safety Shield (lesson 5)
- Robot Voice ( lesson 6)
- Three Step Telling Rule (lesson 7)
- Help seeking behaviour (lesson 8)
- Prompt language—catchy one liners to cue the child with positive behaviour (located at the end of each lesson)
- Group entry and exit skills
- Taking turns.

### 3 Implement the plan

Consistent implementation of the support plan is necessary to ensure a successful outcome for the child. This will require input from the child's parents and other teachers. When parents are involved in the process of implementing the plan the child gains added support and reinforcement of the new skills he or she is learning to manage their peers. To effectively monitor and maintain the plan consider the age and specific needs of the child to determine how frequently feedback and follow-up with the child and the child's parents is required.

### 4 Evaluate the plan

The plan will require regular and systematic evaluation that is simple and efficient. Without this it is impossible to determine if the strategies have been successful. Evaluating the plan allows teachers to amend the strategies and tailor them to be more relevant and specific for the child's needs.

Keep in mind that whatever strategies are adopted aim to protect the child, deter others and foster a change in behaviour for the children involved.

To support teachers in assessing the conflict and implementing effective change, two pro-forma conflict assessment sheets have been developed on pages 16 and 17. A sample has been provided, 'Evan's story' on page 15, to demonstrate how the pro-forma conflict assessment sheet needs to be completed.

# Assessing peer conflict

Name *Evan*

Grade *Prep*

Date *October 2007*

Teacher *Mr Smith*

Draw yourself and the children involved.  
Draw what happens and where it happens.



**Frequency** — How often does this happen?

*Every lunchtime.*

**Extent of time** — When did this start?

*Since the Easter holidays.*

**Level of distress** — How does it make you feel?

*Cry every morning going to school.*



**Child's current management** — What do you do when it happens?

*Walk with the teacher on yard duty.*

**Social context**

**Who is involved?**

*Danny pushes me over, teases me and laughs at me. Other kids are looking, they think it's funny.*



**Where does it happen?**

*He does it at lunchtime on the playground when the teacher isn't looking.*

**What happens?**

*He gets lots of kids to join in and tells them not to let me play.*

# Assessing peer conflict

Name	Grade	Date	Teacher
<p>Draw yourself and the children involved. Draw what happens and where it happens.</p>			
<p><b>Frequency</b> — How often does this happen?</p>			
<p><b>Extent of time</b> — When did this start?</p>			
<p><b>Level of distress</b> — How does it make you feel?</p>			
<p>   </p>			
<p><b>Child's current management</b> — What do you do when it happens?</p>			
<p><b>Social context</b> Who is involved?</p>			
<p>Where does it happen?</p>			
<p>What happens?</p>			

# Support plan for the child

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

When developing the plan adopt a twofold approach by:

- 1 supporting the child with the required social skills
- 2 supporting the child by socially engineering the environment.

## Support strategies

### 1 Social skills

- body language (lessons 3 & 4)
- tone of voice (lessons 3 & 4)
- self-talk (lesson 5)
- Safety Shield (lesson 5)
- Robot Voice (lesson 6)
- Three-step Telling Rule (lesson 7)
- prompt language  
(end of each lesson)
- group entry skills
- taking turns
- other.

### 2 Engineering the social environment

- provide protection
- provide a buddy
- teacher mentor
- locate safe places
- locate exits
- Three Tier Lunch
- classroom seating
- cooperative learning
- inclusive games
- other.



## Child's support plan

List the strategies the student requires.

Date for review \_\_\_\_\_

## Tips for parents

### Helping your child handle bossy peers

Talking with your young child about the upsets and conflict they experience with their peers requires you as parents to be empathic and manage your own feelings. Your child may come home from school or kindergarten and feel angry, upset or withdrawn and unable to articulate the reason why. Parents need to nurture an environment and relationship that encourages children to talk about their highs and lows, and hurts and joys they experience at school.

### Creating an environment

- Children need to feel heard and believed when they share their upsets. When they do share the problem they are experiencing with their friend they may tell only part of the story. As adults we understand that this is their perception of what they have experienced and we may need to gather more pieces of the puzzle to better understand the problem.
- At times parents are required to read between the lines with the conversations they share with their children. It may not be what your child has said but what they haven't said that gives an insight into the peer conflict they are experiencing.
- Children will often share their feelings when they are ready, not when the parent is ready and this can be at inappropriate times. It is important to seize the moment when possible.

### What I can say to my child

- Acknowledge and affirm your child for sharing their feelings as this can be very difficult for some children. Share with them that you will do your best to help them

sort out the problem. You can reassure and support by calmly saying to your child, 'You don't have to do this on your own, I'm so glad you've told me, let's see how we can work this out together.'

- Ask clear and uncomplicated questions to help your child articulate their hurt and to gather as much detail as possible. This helps when you approach the school to explore possible solutions and support. Calmly ask questions that help your child to recognise what is happening, where it occurs, who is involved, how long the problem has been going on and what they do when the problem arises.
- Children who do not want to verbalise may wish to draw a picture about it to share with you. This helps young children to find the words for the event and sequence what has happened.
- It is important at all times that parents manage their upset feelings. When children share their hurts and upset and parents react, judge, blame or express upset feelings children will feel they are to blame and be reluctant to share their feelings with you.

## What I can do for my child

Unfortunately our children are not born with social skills. As parents we need to coach, encourage and model better ways for our children to have their needs met and develop healthy relationships.

- In a discreet manner be a social engineer on behalf of your child by encouraging new friendships. Give your child the message that they can make as many friends as they choose. Many children get fixed into the notion that they can only have one best friend or can only play with one group.
- Nurture and continue to develop in your child an emotional vocabulary that will help them to express how they feel.
- Understand that some children will come home from school and share much about their day and some say nothing or very little. To help foster a shared conversation with your child ask specific questions phrased in a positive manner. For example: 'What games did you play at lunchtime? Who did you play with today? What was the best thing about today? Was there anything tricky about today?'
- Play games with your child that practise taking turns or going out. It is a great skill to be gracious in defeat. Everyone likes a good sport!
- Be a coach rather than an interrogator by calmly asking what happened and how they handled the problem. When parents overreact and interrogate children over friendship issues they can become reluctant to share their problems for fear of being blamed or judged. Avoid blaming and criticising the other children involved. Focus on a solution.
- As a parent be mindful of how you model your personal power. Children model what they see. Avoid aggressive tactics as this gives children the message that aggression solves problems.
- Read to your child picture story books that explore friendships issues. This gives children a message that having a friend isn't always perfect and happy and that all

friendships have problems to sort out. It is how we choose to sort these out that is important.

## Teaching your child strategies to deal with bossy friends

Any new skill learnt whether technical, practical, academic or social requires training, coaching and constant re-visiting to ensure that the child understands what the skill is and how and when to apply it.

Training children in a variety of strategies for assertiveness supports them as they handle conflict, manage bossy peers and begin to understand that what they say and do has consequences for themselves and others. This requires a sensitive adult to raise children's awareness to how they use their body language, tone of voice, words and actions during confrontation. We do not expect young children to master this but they should begin to become aware of their personal power and how this affects others.

Explore with your child the idea that it is easier for bossy peers to have power over you when you react by letting all of your feelings come out like an Angry Alligator or a Scared Mouse.

Scared Mouse means reacting by crying, sulking and looking scared. Angry Alligator means reacting by fighting, shouting and getting mad. Explain to your child that instead of reacting like an Angry Alligator or a Scared Mouse they need to stay calm by being a Cool Calm Kid. A Cool Calm Kid is one who can stand tall, speak clearly, looks their friend in the eye and doesn't use mean words.

Using the above as a framework the strategies for dealing with bossy friends can be taught and regularly rehearsed.

### 1 Confident Body Language

Discuss the importance of body language and how their body language gives a message. Coach and remind your child to stand tall, keep still, make eye contact, and with arms by their side and feet a little bit apart, imagine a strong feeling inside their tummy even though they may feel scared.

### 2 Safety Shield

Encourage your child to visualise a clear plastic shield over them whereby the teasing and put-downs bounce off and back. This helps to slow down their need to react (Suckling & Temple 2001).

### 3 Robot Voice

Discuss with your child how they can program their voice to sound like a robot. This is done by saying the same statement again and again while maintaining a similar tone of voice and body language and looking like a Cool Calm Kid (Suckling & Temple 2001). For example:

Child 1: Give me your toy or else.

Child 2: *No, I don't lend this toy.*

Child 1: Give it to me or you're never allowed to play.

Child 2: *No, I don't lend this toy.*

Child 1: If you don't give it to me you'll be sorry.

Child 2: *No, I don't lend this toy.*

#### 4 Three Step Telling Rule

Explain to your child that it is acceptable to ask the bossy child to stop their behaviour, whether it is actions and/or words that are making them feel uncomfortable and unsafe. The Three Step Telling Rule helps your child to have a go at sorting out the problem for themselves before going to an adult or teacher. Coach your child to stand tall, speak clearly, look them in the eye and firmly say,

Step 1: *Stop it, I don't like it.* If behaviour continues your child then says:

Step 2: *Stop it now or I'm telling the teacher.* If behaviour continues your child says:

Step 3: *Stop it; I'm going now to tell the teacher.*

Talk to your child about the importance of walking away like a Cool Calm Kid to talk to the teacher about it.

#### 5 Using 'I' messages

Asking a young child to use an 'I' message can be difficult for them to do. Their inclination will be to phrase statements in terms of 'you,' lay blame and react. Coaching and rehearsing is important. For example:

Cool Calm Kid *I don't like it when you say those words to me. I want you to stop.*

Angry Alligator *Shut up or I'll hit you.*

Scared Mouse *It's not fair. You're always mean to me.*

#### 6 Positive self-talk

Coach your child to develop self-talk by reminding them to make their thoughts their friend. When your child is aware of their self-talk it enables them to change the quality of their thinking, which will influence their behaviour. For example: *I get stronger every day. It's okay to ask the teacher for help. Not everyone has to be my friend.*

#### 7 Ignore and walk away

Share with your child that if they do not know what to say or do, the best thing is to ignore the bossy child and walk away with strong body language and visualise their safety shield. Discuss with your child that they need to walk away to a place where they can be seen, feel safe—either to a group or to an adult.

#### 8 Asking an adult for help.

Encourage your child to talk to an adult about the problem they have with their friend. Rehearse a simple statement of help with your child, remind them to speak clearly, stand still and make eye contact with the adult so that they can be heard.

#### 9 Talk to your child's teacher.

It is advisable not to deal with the child in question yourself. Make an appointment to speak to your child's teacher in private to explore strategies. Set a date to follow up.



## What if my child is bossing?

No child is immune from engaging in negative hurtful behaviour. This is upsetting and frustrating for parents to find out about their child. The most demanding role for parents is to find the continual energy to support, encourage and model to their children better ways to have their needs met.

- 1 Talk to your child about the effect their behaviour has on other children. Often young children have no idea how hurtful their words and actions can be. This helps them develop empathy.
- 2 Help your child make distinctions between fair and unfair play.
- 3 Help your child understand that he or she cannot always have their own way or what they want when they want it. Accepting 'no' graciously is an important life skill.
- 4 Your child may be playing with a group of children where he or she may need to do the 'dirty work' for that group in order to maintain their place in the group. This can be very difficult for a child because the need to belong is so great. Help them to understand the social dynamic and gently steer them towards other friendship groups. Children need to know that it is okay to say 'no' to their friends.
- 5 Your child may be acting in revenge where he or she is being bossed around and manipulated by others and seeks to address this by taking out their hurt and angry feelings on someone outside their peer group. Find creative ways to help your child vent their anger and frustration without hurting another child's feelings.
- 6 Work in partnership with the school to support your child. It is very confusing for a young child if they are encouraged by parents to deal with conflict aggressively but the message they receive from their teachers and the school is that this is not acceptable.
- 7 Share conversations with your child to help them understand that nobody deserves to be treated in nasty, bossy and hurtful ways. Story books and television shows can be used as a helpful resource. Affirm their attempts at making positive change, this doesn't happen overnight. Avoid blaming and shaming your child as this does not support change.

Remember, your child is only young and these are skills that take a lifetime to master. Good luck and have fun.

An abstract graphic at the top of the page consisting of several overlapping, wavy, horizontal bands in shades of gray. The bands have a layered, paper-like appearance, with some darker shades in front of lighter ones. The overall shape is horizontal and spans the width of the page.

*part two*

# Putting it into practice



# Great mates and mean mates

## Background information

By the time the child is five years of age they are keen to move out in the world and are excited by the experience of starting school and making friends. Each child will bring with them a limited resource of social, emotional and cognitive competencies by which to navigate and negotiate the world around them and explore the dynamics of having friends. The rate at which each child develops these competencies will vary from individual to individual and from year level to year level.

The school environment is the social context by which young children will:

- experience peer pressure and the play off of having a best friend
- experiment with a variety of new behaviours in order to conform and gain acceptance from peers
- understand that a best friend is not forever
- move from parallel play to interactive play.

All of this can be daunting for the young child who comes to school ill-equipped and inexperienced. Attempting to understand, negotiate and manage friendships is a process that continues throughout a child's school life.

It goes without saying that every child wants a best friend, a beaut buddy or a great mate. They also want to be that for others. Surveys show that what matters most to students is the quality of the relationships they experience at school. These relationships determine both happiness and unhappiness (Weare 2004). An obvious place to start therefore is to help children identify the behaviour of a good friend and what constitutes fair and unfair play, then build on the socio-emotional competencies required to be a great mate and have great mates. This process is not simply the result of osmosis. It requires teachers to provide a healthy social climate as discussed in chapter two and engage the students in explicit teaching with frequent revision, repetition and rehearsal of their emerging social skills. It is never too early to start. Schaefer and DiGeronimo (2000) believe that the ability to make and maintain friendships starts early in the child's life.

Below is a sample of what five to eight year olds would say to describe mean mates and great mates.

<b>Mean Mates</b>	<b>Great mates</b>
tease	help you find your toys
swear	smile at you
boss you around	say you are nice
don't let you play	let you go leader
blame you for everything	let you play
take your lollies	give you turns
hit, kick, push	play fair
never let you go leader	say sorry
say you have germs	share their toys
call you a baby	make you laugh
lie about you	say your work is nice
copy your voice	take you to the teacher if you are hurt

## Purpose of lesson

The purpose of the lesson is to enable children to identify both negative and positive behaviour in friendships.

## Learning outcomes

Children identify between fair and unfair play.

Children make distinctions between great mates and mean mates.

## Requirements for the lesson

Activity Sheet 1 (page 28)

## Activities

- 1 Brainstorm specific behaviours of a great mate and a mean mate (record on poster paper and display).
- 2 Students cut out pictures from magazines of happy children, paste onto paper and write a great mate statement. Example, 'Come and play with us.' 'It's your turn to have a go.' Make into book or mural.
- 3 Children draw their great mate and the fun they have together, write a sentence about this.

- 4 Bring a game or toy from home to share with a great mate(s).
- 5 Be a great mate and do something kind for someone this week. Report back in sharing circle.
- 6 Be a great mate by asking someone new to join your game.
- 7 Make a poster using the prompt language statement.
- 8 Complete Activity Sheet 1.

## Coaching tips

- Seize the moment and catch children being great mates.
- Establish class agreement that no child is labelled a mean mate.
- Focus on labelling behaviours not labelling children.

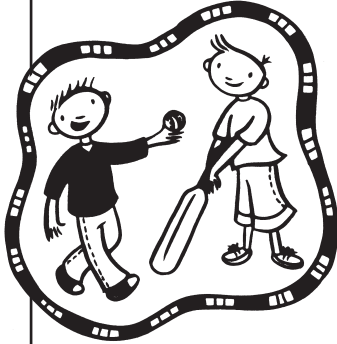
## Prompt language statements

**Great mates cooperate.**

**There's always room for one more.**

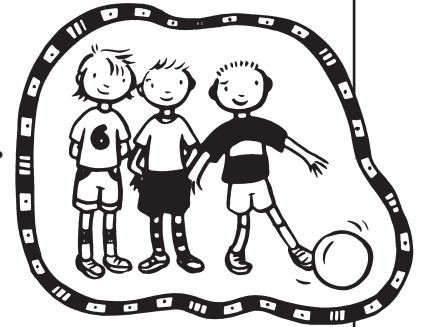
# Great mates

Copy any three or make up your own.



share a game

1.....



take turns

2.....

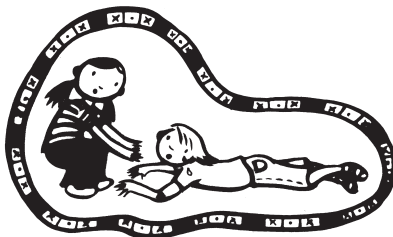


smile at you

3.....



let you play



help you



say kind words



Great Mates Co-operate★

# We all have feelings

## Background information

Empathy like any other social competency takes time and commitment from an adult, especially when fostering in children the foundation for social emotional learning. Empathy can be defined as the ability to put oneself in the other person's shoes and attempt to interpret the world as they do. 'Empathy is a form of emotional mind-reading which has particular significance within personal relationships' (Warden & Christie, 1997). The importance of teaching empathy in schools has become even more significant due to the value placed on individualism in western culture.

Weare (2004) suggests that empathy is a difficult skill for young children to learn due to their egocentric nature but by age seven they begin to understand this concept. This may explain the frustration sometimes experienced by teachers when they ask a young child, 'How would you feel if that was you?' Many a time the child will look blankly without any understanding of the situation and with little regard for the other children involved. The ability to empathise however does strengthen and develop with age. 'By late childhood the most advanced level of empathy emerges as children are able to understand distress beyond the immediate situation' (Hoffman in Goleman, 1996). Many educators recognise the importance of creating a social climate in their classroom that allows empathy to develop in their students. Goleman believes that the ability to empathise is the fundamental people skill.

From our experience we often hear young children say, 'It's not fair,' when another child has not considered their feelings. It would be unrealistic to think that all young children can consider and understand the feelings of others. The best place to start is to equip the child with an emotional vocabulary to express their feelings and to help them begin to understand that others have feelings too. Teachers are in the ideal situation to nurture empathy in their students due to the nature of the classroom and playground and the countless social exchanges that occur.



## Purpose of lesson

The purpose of this lesson is to develop children's emotional vocabulary as a tool for expressing their feelings and understanding the feelings of others.

## Learning outcome

Children empathise and verbalise how Mean Mates and Great Mates make them feel.

## Requirements for the lesson

Activity Sheet 2 (page 32)

## Activities

### 1 Game—Mirror Me

Teacher makes a variety of facial gestures for children to copy and name the emotion. Example: happy, sad, excited, scared, angry, worried, lonely, proud and surprised.

### 2 Game—Copy Me Circle

Children make a circle; child in the centre of the circle names an emotion and demonstrates this for children in the circle to copy.

### 3 Read children the Great Mates story and the Mean Mates story below. Ask children to imagine how they would feel. List their responses for each story on separate poster paper. Build a list of feeling words and display.

#### *Mean Mate story*

Chris likes to play games with the basketball at lunchtime and playtime and uses the basketball that belongs to the class. Playing games with the basketball is Chris's favourite thing to do. Chris thinks it's funny to say to Kerry, 'You can't play with us. You are so dumb at ball. You can't even run fast enough to catch the ball. I'm telling everyone not to give you a turn or let you play.'

How would Kerry feel?

#### *Great Mate story*

Casey has brought a fun game from home for Show and Tell and to play with at lunchtime on the playground. Casey has lots of friends who want a turn. Casey gives everyone a turn with the game and tells them things like, 'You are doing a great job. If it's a bit tricky I'll help you with it.' A new child called Pat has just arrived from another school who did not know anyone. Casey smiles at Pat and says, 'Do you want to play with us, I'll give you a turn of my new game.'

How would Pat feel?

- 4 Cut out pictures of faces from magazines and invite children to provide words that describe the feelings expressed on each face. Make it into a class book or mural. Children write the words to describe the emotions or for non-readers teachers write this.
- 5 Children work in pairs to make faces with a variety of expressions from plasticine or clay. Encourage children to name the feelings on the faces they have created.
- 6 Make a poster using the prompt language statement.
- 7 Complete Activity Sheet 2.

## Coaching tips

- When reading the Mean Mate story, please change the names in the story if you have a child in your class with that name. Genderless names have been chosen for the story. Please choose what will work best for your class.
- Encourage and extend children's emotional vocabulary when incidents arise.
- Notice when children are engaging in empathic behaviour in the classroom and the playground and affirm. This helps children build a deeper understanding.
- When children are resolving conflict and disputes encourage them to verbalise their feelings. For example ask each child involved: How do you feel about this? How do you think Mary might feel about this? How can we make this better?

## Prompt language statement

**Fair is fun for everyone.**

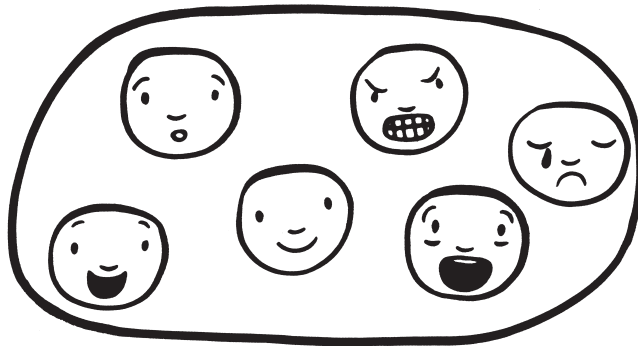
# We all have feelings

Draw a line to match the word to the face.

worried

happy

excited



sad

angry

scared

## How would you feel?

## Draw

## Write

My friends share their toys with me.



.....

My friend won't let me play.



.....

My sister broke my toy.





.....

I'm invited to my friend's party.



.....

 <p>You can't play Kerry. You're too slow with the ball.</p> <p>Draw how Kerry would feel.</p>	 <p>Come and play with us Pat. It's your turn.</p> <p>Draw how Pat would feel.</p>
---	---



Fair is fun for everyone. ★ ★ ★

# Reactions: Angry Alligator and Scared Mouse

## Background information

Many children are unaware that their body language and words have a potent effect on those around them. To help build resilience children need to be encouraged to explore their internal world—their thoughts, feelings and attitudes—and be made aware as to how this influences their behaviour (actions, tone of voice, words and body language). This provides the groundwork to understanding the consequences and repercussions of their actions and encourages the belief that they have a choice (Suckling & Temple 2001).

This lesson explores passive and aggressive reactions when dealing with bossy peers. The reactions of young children are often emotional and immediate as they struggle to understand their own feelings and the feelings of others. To help children understand the concept of reaction we start with the notion of body language. We share with young children that body language is when your body does the *talking* not your words and gives messages about how you feel.

In supporting young children to understand these concepts we have created three simple definitions below.

- 1** A reaction is when all your upset feelings come out and you can't control them.
- 2** Angry Alligator is a metaphor to illustrate an aggressive reaction. An Angry Alligator reaction is when you shout, fight and get mad. Refer to Poster 1 (Appendices, page 63).
- 3** Scared Mouse is a metaphor to illustrate a passive reaction. A Scared Mouse reaction is when you cry, sulk and look scared. Refer to Poster 2 (Appendices, page 64).

Children need to understand that their passive or aggressive reactions inflame the conflict and can encourage the bossy peer to continue. This creates a negative cycle that leaves the vulnerable child disempowered. For young children to understand the

reaction cycle teachers must provide explicit teaching of the concepts above, keeping the language simple and constantly revising and revisiting.

## Purpose of lesson

The purpose of this lesson is to make students aware of the different ways of reacting to others (passive and aggressive) and the consequences of this.

## Learning outcomes

Students make distinctions between aggressive and passive reactions.

Students identify that reacting passively or aggressively can encourage peers to persist with bossy and manipulative behaviour.

## Requirements for the lesson

Posters 1 and 2 (Appendices, pages 63–64), enlarge for class discussion.

Activity Sheet 3 (page 37)

## Activities

### 1 Game—Show me your body language

Teacher asks children to show with their body language their reactions to these scenarios.

You're angry because your friends won't let you play.

You're sad because your friend calls you mean names.

You're scared because a friend scribbled on your work and told the teacher you did it.

You're mad because your friend took your ball and didn't give it back.

Think of other examples.

### 2 Game—Pick the poster

Display Poster 1 Angry Alligator and Poster 2 Scared Mouse. The teacher role-plays the statements below in the tone of voice prescribed with matching body language. At the end of each statement children call out the name of the reaction.

You're not fair you never let me play. (cry, whine, sulk)

You can't play because you've got germs. (loud and angry)

I want a turn. I never get a turn. (cry, whine, sulk)

If you don't let me play you can't come to my party. (loud and angry)

It's my toy. Do I have to give it to you? I don't want to. (cry, whine, sulk)

Give me the ball now or I'll tell everyone not to be your friend ever. (loud and angry)

### 3 Story: Give me your chocolate.

Read and discuss the two stories below to explore and explain the reaction cycle to children. The more reaction a child gives the more power they give others to treat them in a bossy and negative manner.

#### *Story 1 Give me your chocolate*

(Angry Alligator reaction) Teacher reads in an aggressive tone.

Bobby says to Terry, 'Give me your chocolate or you can't play.' Terry hits Bobby with the chocolate and shouts, 'You can't have my chocolate ever.' Bobby yells back to Terry shouting, 'If you don't give me the chocolate I'll tell everyone not to be your friend.' Terry shoves and pushes Bobby and says in a loud angry voice, 'You can't have them ever.' Bobby snatches the chocolate and runs away laughing and yells, 'That was fun, and you look so silly when you get mad.'

How did Terry react?

Did Terry get to eat the chocolate?

What happens to Bobby's power when Terry reacts?

#### *Story 2 Give me your chocolate*

(Scared Mouse reaction) Teacher reads in a passive tone.

Bobby says to Terry, 'If you want to play with us you have to give me your chocolate or you can't play.' Terry starts crying and says with a scared sulky little voice, 'I don't want to. You always take my things and then never let me play, it's not fair, and you're mean. Just let me play.' Bobby yells at Terry, 'If you don't give me the chocolate now I'll tell everyone you've got germs and you can't play.' Terry is scared and crying and hands over the chocolate like he/she did the other day. Bobby runs off to join other friends and says, 'You're a cry baby, what will you have for me tomorrow baby?'

How did Terry react?

Did Terry get to eat the chocolate?

What happens to Bobby's power when Terry reacts?

- 4 Ask children when they next watch television to notice people's body language and how they react like an Angry Alligator or a Scared Mouse.
- 5 Make a poster using the prompt language statement.
- 6 Complete Activity Sheet 3.

## Coaching tips

- Encourage children to be aware of the message their body language gives to others.
- Remind children to think before they act.
- Remember that the children are only young and are just beginning to understand their own behaviour.
- When reading the story, 'Give me your chocolate' please change the names of the children in the story if you have a child in your class with that name. Genderless names have been chosen. Please use what will work best for your class.

## Prompt language statement

**Don't react, think then act.**



A reaction is when I let  
all my upset feelings out, like a  
Scared Mouse or Angry Alligator.

### Scared Mouse



### Angry Alligator



Draw or write about a time  
you were a scared mouse.

Draw or write about a time  
you were an angry alligator.



Don't react, think then act. ★



## Be a Cool Calm Kid

### Background information

Many parents have said to their child ‘stick up for yourself’ but the child is uncertain how to do this. Their attempt to stick up for themselves can result in tears, the child giving in to the bossy demands of their peers, or the child having an angry outburst.

During our student workshops young children aged between five and eight years have shared with us their understanding of what it means to ‘stick up for yourself’. Here is a sample:

- It’s when you hit them back but not too hard ’cos then you get into trouble.
- Shout back in their face.
- Be brave as if your mum and dad were next to you.
- Punch them in the nose.

Handling conflict in a calm manner is a challenging and complex skill for children. When a young child is in a situation where there is conflict they are required to use higher order thinking. This is difficult for some children as they are required to manage their emotions, understand the nature of the conflict and interpret the other child’s feelings.

Children need to learn as early as possible that it is acceptable to express their needs and feelings respectfully during conflict as this is a valuable life skill. Most importantly, they need to be shown how to do this and be provided with numerous opportunities to revise and rehearse in a safe and supportive environment. The term we use to help children understand how to ‘stick up for yourself’ is to be a Cool Calm Kid. When in conflict with a peer a Cool Calm Kid is one who:

- stands tall
- speaks clearly
- looks the person in the eye
- does not use mean words.

A Cool Calm Kid can speak to their bossy friends about how they feel and what they need without reacting like a Scared Mouse or an Angry Alligator (concepts covered in Lesson 3). Teachers need to acknowledge that when a child adopts the behaviour of a Cool Calm Kid to handle bossy peers, inside they may feel scared, worried and hurt. Choosing the behaviour of a Cool Calm Kid helps the child manage their upset feelings but does not necessarily remove them.

Children may need a cue to support them as they become calm and focus their mind in readiness to adopt the behaviour of a Cool Calm Kid. Encourage children to use the prompt language statements ‘Count to ten then start again’ and ‘I keep my cool when I’m at school’ (refer to page 40). To help children manage their behaviour like a Cool Calm Kid it is essential that teachers provide numerous opportunities to rehearse, revise, prompt and affirm these ideas in a safe and supportive environment.

## Purpose of lesson

The purpose of this lesson is to teach children how to manage their personal power when in conflict through appropriate body language messages, verbal responses and tone of voice.

## Learning outcome

Children identify and demonstrate the behaviour of a Cool Calm Kid.

## Requirements for the lesson

Posters 1, 2 and 3 (Appendices, pages 63–65), enlarge for classroom discussion.  
Activity Sheet 4 (page 41)

## Activities

- 1 Read the story ‘Give me your chocolate’ in three different ways.

Like an Angry Alligator, page 35 (to revise aggressive reaction).

Like a Scared Mouse, page 35 (to revise passive reaction).

Like a Cool Calm Kid, below (to introduce non-reactionary behaviour).

### *Give me your chocolate*

Terry sees Bobby coming over as she is getting her chocolate out of her lunchbox. Bobby says to Terry, ‘I’m hungry so give me your chocolate or you can’t play.’ Terry looks Bobby in the eye and says in a calm voice, ‘I’m hungry and this is my

chocolate.’ Bobby continues being mean and says in a louder voice, ‘If you don’t give it to me I’ll tell everyone you are a baby and you have germs.’ Terry says in a clear voice, ‘This chocolate is for my play lunch and I’m eating it.’ Bobby tells Terry she will never be her friend or let her play ever again. Terry walks away proud to be a Cool Calm Kid and eats the chocolate.

Compare Terry’s behaviour in each of the three stories highlighting the differences between the behaviour and the outcome.

Introduce Poster 3, Cool Calm Kid. Children rehearse the statements below adopting the body language and tone of voice of a Cool Calm Kid.

It’s my chocolate and you can’t have it.

I’m hungry and I’m eating my chocolate.

No, this is my chocolate for play lunch.

**2** Brainstorm when to be a Cool Calm Kid (record and display).

**3** Game of Simon Says

Simon says stand like an Angry Alligator, Simon says stand like a Cool Calm Kid, Simon says stand like a Scared Mouse and so on.

**4** Game of Statues

Make a statue of a Cool Calm Kid, make a statue of an Angry Alligator, make a statue of a Scared Mouse and so on.

**5** Make a poster using the prompt language statements.

**6** Complete Activity Sheet 4.

## Coaching tips

- Revise reactions of a Scared Mouse and Angry Alligator.
- Encourage children when and where possible to resolve their upsets like a Cool Calm Kid, affirming their attempts.
- Cue with prompt language.
- The names in the story, ‘Give me your chocolate’ have been chosen for their genderless nature. Remind the children that both Terry and Bobby can be names for boys or girls. Please feel free to change the names, particularly if you have children with those names in your class.

## Prompt language statements

**Count to ten then start again.**

**I keep my cool when I’m at school.**

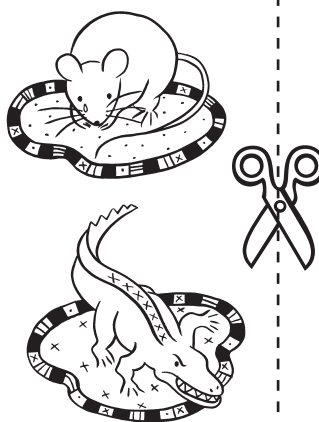
# Be a Cool Calm Kid

I choose to be a **C**..... **C**..... **K**.....  
when I'm bossed around.

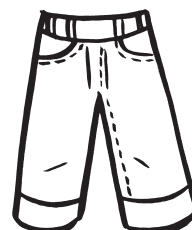
I don't react like an **A**..... **A**.....

or a **S**..... **M**.....

**Paste the body here.**



Cut and paste the Cool Calm Kid.



look at them

stand tall

don't use mean words

speak clearly






I keep my cool when I'm at school.

## My Safety Shield and self-talk

### Background information

Providing children with pro-social skills to begin their journey of self-reliance is crucial when managing the ups and downs of school life. Experience teaches children early that life's not perfect and that conflict and upsets regularly manifest themselves. How a child thinks about the conflict can either compound it or help to resolve it. Training young children with a repertoire of skills that enables them to recover from setbacks and give the situation another go builds resilience and resourcefulness. Teaching young children such skills as self-talk and visualisation assists this.

Self-talk can be explained as the inner dialogue that guides and defines the image of who we are and how we behave. Seligman (1991) believes that it is not adequate to simply give a child a positive statement and expect change to occur. A child needs to be made aware of what they are thinking during the conflict or the set-back and learn to modify these negative self-suggestions to thoughts that are constructive. This builds optimistic thinking.

When introducing the skill of self-talk young children will need their awareness raised as to the quality of their own thoughts, and explicit teaching that instructs them on what to say and when to say it. Here are some simple starters that we have used: I can...; It's okay to...; I'm getting better at...; (Suckling & Temple 2001).

Children can accompany the listening of their self-talk with visualisation. Encourage young children to visualise a Safety Shield. This is a clear, strong plastic shield that surrounds and protects them. When the child meets with mean words, looks and actions they visualise these bouncing off their Safety Shield. This can delay and possibly cease the need to react aggressively and /or passively.

It is important to share with children that even though they use their Safety Shield and self-talk to help them be brave, it is normal to feel scared and threatened on the inside.

When combining positive self-talk with visualisation it provides the child with a portable, private and transferable skill that can be used at school and outside of school.

It supports them in beginning to navigate their life and become their own personal coach.

## Purpose of lesson

The purpose of this lesson is to introduce children to positive self-talk and visualisation of their Safety Shield as self-management tools.

## Learning outcome

Children visualise their Safety Shield and listen to their positive self-talk to manage reactionary behaviour.

## Requirements for the lesson

Posters 1, 2 and 3 (Appendices, pages 63–65), enlarge for classroom use.  
Activity Sheet 5 (page 45)

## Activities

- 1 Discuss and rehearse with the children how to use their Safety Shield.

Discuss what it is and when to use it. Explain to the children that their thoughts make pictures inside their head and that these thoughts can help make them feel brave or scared, empowered or disempowered. Their Safety Shield is a strong, clear, plastic shield that goes all the way over them so when the mean words, looks and actions come their way they visualise them bouncing off. Remind children to stand tall like a Cool Calm Kid when rehearsing their Safety Shield.

Rehearse with children how to stand like a Cool Calm Kid inside their Safety Shield.

- 2 Discuss and rehearse how to use their self-talk.

Discuss with the children what it is and how to use it. Self-talk is made up of the words that go on inside their head. These words and thoughts create a feeling inside their body that steers their behaviour. Self-talk can be positive or negative. Example:

*Nobody likes me.*

*I have some friends to play with.*

Rehearse with children how to stand like a Cool Calm Kid and inside their mind say these self-talk statements with a good feeling in their tummy.

*I can handle this.*

*I'll give it a go.*

*I can keep my cool at school.*

- 3 Rehearse Safety Shield and self-talk together.  
Encourage children to both visualise their Safety Shield and hear the words of their self-talk inside their head. Some children may need to verbalise these statements aloud.
- 4 Brainstorm self-talk statements children can use to help them feel brave (record on poster paper and display).
- 5 Brainstorm when to use their Safety Shield and self-talk to feel brave (record on poster paper and display).
- 6 On a sheet of paper children paste down a Safety Shield made of confetti, pipe cleaners, matches, or macaroni and draw themselves inside their shield looking like a Cool Calm Kid.
- 7 Children bring from home a plastic soft drink bottle that has been cut in half. Children use the bottom half of the bottle to represent a safety shield. Make a plasticine character standing tall and strong like a Cool Calm Kid to place inside it.
- 8 Make a poster using the prompt language statement.
- 9 Complete Activity Sheet 5.

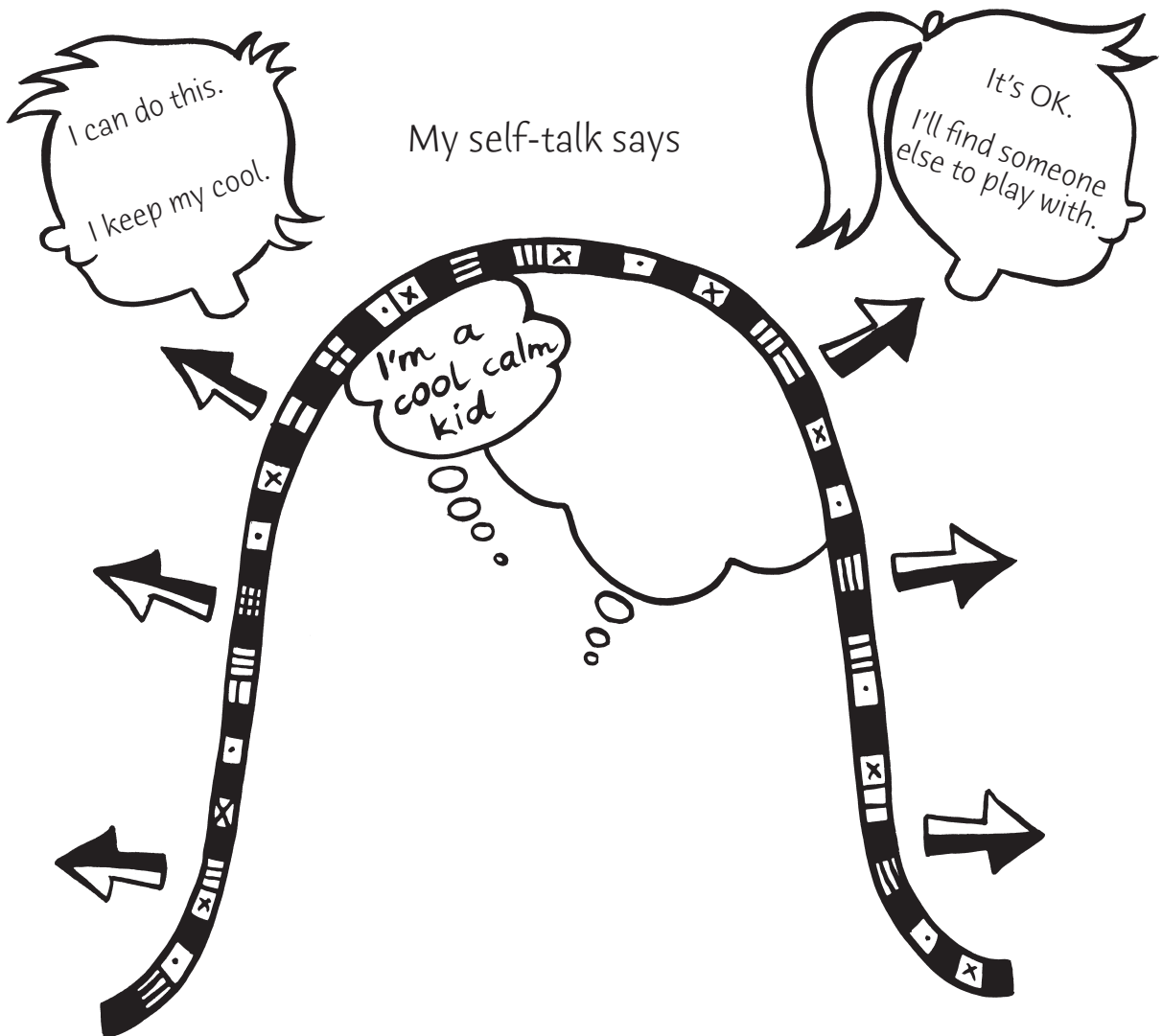
## Coaching tips

- Remember they are young learners and may require many rehearsals and reminders of the skill.
- Displaying Posters 1, 2 and 3 during this lesson supports revision.
- Use a seize-the-moment approach. Ask children what they were saying and thinking inside their head. If necessary offer a statement that will support them.
- Encourage children to apply their self-talk to a variety of situations that may present as a challenge for them. For example: prior to a sports event, a test, speaking in front of the class and behavioural issues they are trying to manage.

## Prompt language statement

**I make my thoughts my friend.**

# My Self-Talk and Safety Shield help me be a Cool Calm Kid



Draw yourself inside and copy a self-talk statement in the thinking bubble.



I make my thoughts my friend. ★



## Robot Voice

### Background information

Robot Voice is a strategy for assertiveness that can be used when a child is being bossed around by peers and made to do things he or she does not want to do. Standing up to threats is not only a difficult task for children but also for adults. Robot Voice, however, is easy for children to retain because the statements are brief and repetitive. Like any new skill children will require explicit teaching, revision and an understanding of when to apply the strategy.

This strategy is commonly known as Broken Record. When conducting student workshops in schools most children had no concept of a record so we renamed this strategy Robot Voice. Children understand that when a robot speaks it repeats the same statement with the same tone of voice again and again in a calm manner, without any reactions. Usually the bossy child who is being threatening and manipulative becomes bored because he or she is unable to elicit a reaction. Here is an example:

Student 1: Give me your toy or else.

Student 2: *No, I don't lend this toy.*

Student 1: Give it to me or you're never allowed to play.

Student 2: *No, I don't lend this toy.*

Student 1: If you don't give it to me you'll be sorry.

Student 2: *No, I don't lend this toy.*

It is wise to share with children that while they look like a Cool Calm Kid and use their Robot Voice, it is normal to feel scared and upset. Robot Voice helps them give the message that they are in control (Suckling & Temple 2001).

If the bossy child persists with the threats, encourage the child to walk away to a group, teacher or adult—somewhere they feel seen and safe. Remind children to talk to a teacher or adult about it if necessary.

## Purpose of lesson

The purpose of this lesson is to extend children's repertoire of strategies to manage bossy peers by introducing Robot Voice.

## Learning outcome

Children rehearse Robot Voice and visualise their Safety Shield as a strategy to cool down the conflict.

## Requirements for the lesson

Posters 1, 2 and 3 (Appendices, pages 63–65), enlarge for classroom use.  
Activity Sheet 6 (page 49)

## Activities

- 1 Define and rehearse Robot Voice like a Cool Calm Kid with the children.  
Talk about the characteristics of a robot. Explain that they don't shout and fight like an Angry Alligator or cry and sulk like a Scared Mouse. A robot repeats the same message again and again and keeps its cool.

Rehearse Robot Voice using the script below. Teacher takes on the role of Student 1 and the class takes on the role of Student 2 responding like a Cool Calm Kid. Remind children to visualise their Safety Shield and use brave self-talk (refer Lesson 5).

Student 1: Give me your toy or else.

Student 2: *No, I don't lend this toy.*

Student 1: Give it to me or you're never allowed to play.

Student 2: *No, I don't lend this toy.*

Student 1: If you don't give it to me you'll be sorry.

Student 2: *No, I don't lend this toy.*

- 2 Brainstorm appropriate times to use Robot Voice. Example: when someone wants your money, game, belongings, lunch.
- 3 Use puppets to rehearse the script or make up your own script.
- 4 Game of Lucky Dip  
Find a box and place a selection of objects such as games, toys and hats inside it. Select a child to take a lucky dip. Use this item to role-play Robot Voice. Remember that the teacher takes on the role of the Mean Mate and the selected child, along with the class, responds like a Cool Calm Kid using Robot Voice.
- 5 Make a poster using the prompt language statement.
- 6 Complete Activity Sheet 6.

## Coaching tips

- Remind children to stand like a Cool Calm Kid and to visualise their Safety Shield when using Robot Voice.
- Display Posters 1, 2 and 3 during this lesson to support revision.
- When they have used Robot Voice encourage children to then walk away from the conflict to a group, teacher or adult, and to somewhere where they are seen and feel safe.
- When rehearsing the strategy, only the teacher is to take on the role of the Mean Mate.

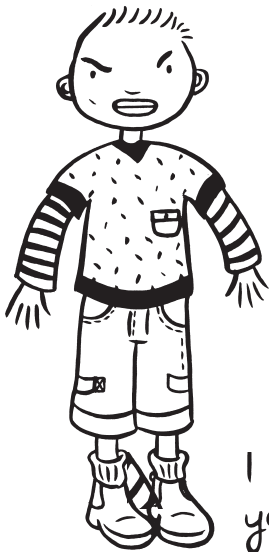
## Prompt language statement

**Robot Voice is another good choice, another good choice, another good choice.**

# Robot Voice

My Robot Voice is when I repeat the same statement again and again and again.

Give me your toy.



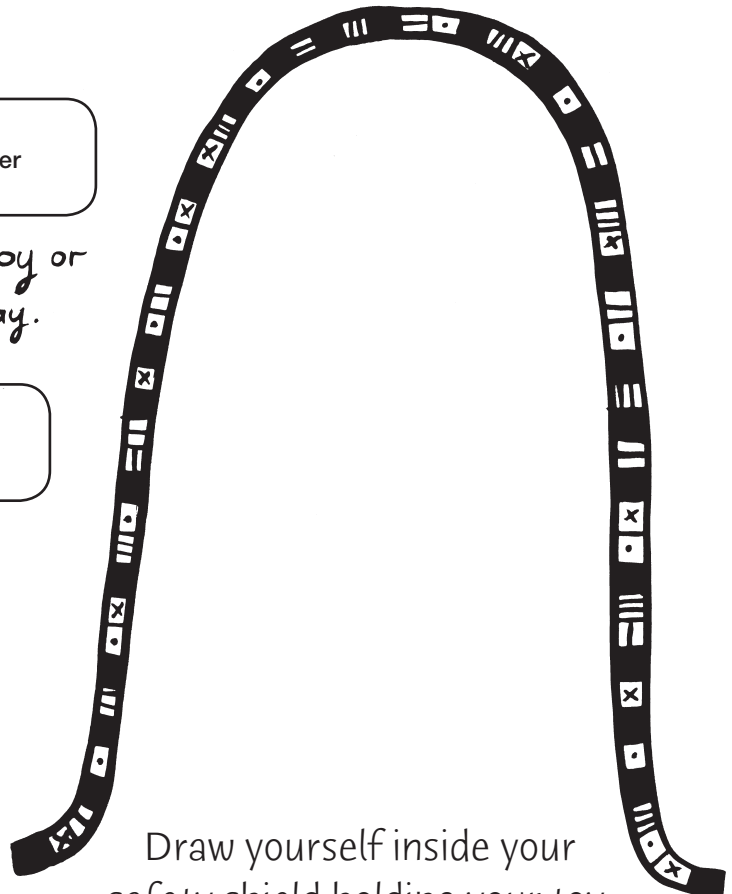
Paste over

Give me your toy or  
you can't play.

Paste over

I said give me  
your toy or I'll  
push you.

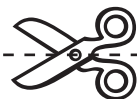
Paste over



Draw yourself inside your  
safety shield holding your toy.



Robot Voice is another good choice, another good choice, ★  
another good choice ★



**trace cut paste**

No, I don't  
lend this toy.

No, I don't  
lend this toy.

No, I don't  
lend this toy.

## Three Step Telling Rule

### Background information

The Three Step Telling Rule is a strategy that adds to the young child's repertoire when dealing with bossy peers. This strategy empowers children to have a go at asserting themselves during the conflict. The statement in each step is intentionally brief with a sense of repetition, as this makes it easier for the young child to retain what they need to say. Often when a child is under stress the ability to find the words becomes a difficult and overwhelming task. The three steps in the rule are:

Step 1: Stop it, I don't like it.

Step 2: Stop it now or I'm telling the teacher.

Step 3: I'm going now to tell the teacher.

Talk to the children about when to use it and how to use it. This strategy can be used when a child chooses to tease about a student's school work, attempts to take the student's personal belongings, and engages in inappropriate and hurtful body language gesturing. The Three Step Telling Rule loses its power when children choose to react by saying the three steps like an Angry Alligator or Scared Mouse. This rule has its greatest impact when said like a Cool Calm Kid. By accompanying the three steps with the physical gesture of open hands raised at chest height gives more impact to the spoken word and gives a hands-off message.

Setting children up with a strategy that is easy to remember removes the possibility of taking the easy option of immediately running to the teacher when conflict arises. Kaiser and Sklar Rasminsky (2007) advise that if teachers continually solve conflict issues for victimised children the children learn to become helpless and dependent.

## Purpose of lesson

The purpose of this lesson is to introduce the Three Step Telling Rule, which will extend the repertoire of strategies children have to manage bossy peers. This strategy encourages children to have a go at sorting out the conflict for themselves.

## Learning outcome

Children demonstrate cool calm behaviour (body language and words) by applying the Three Step Telling Rule.

## Requirements for the lesson

Poster 3 and 4 (Appendices, pages 65 and 66), enlarge for classroom use.  
Activity Sheet 7 (page 53)

## Activities

- 1 Discuss the Three Step Telling Rule. Encourage children to have a go first at sorting out their problems with their peers by using the Three Step Telling Rule instead of immediately going to the teacher for help.
- 2 Role-play and rehearse the strategy. The teacher adopts the role of the bossy child and the class responds with the Three Step Telling Rule. Use the script below and Poster 4. Remind children to visualise their Safety Shield and stand like a Cool Calm Kid.

Bossy child: Your work is so dumb, it looks silly.

Child: *Stop it, I don't like it.*

Bossy child: I have a little sister who could do better work than you.

Child: *Stop it now or I'm telling the teacher.*

Bossy child: Your work is like a baby's.

Child: *I'm going now to tell the teacher.*

- 3 Brainstorm suitable times children can use the strategy (list on poster paper and display in the classroom).
- 4 Role-play and rehearse the strategy in pairs (Poster 4 and script above).
- 5 Role-play and rehearse the strategy with puppets (Poster 4 and script above).
- 6 Make a poster using the prompt language statement.
- 7 Complete Activity Sheet 7.

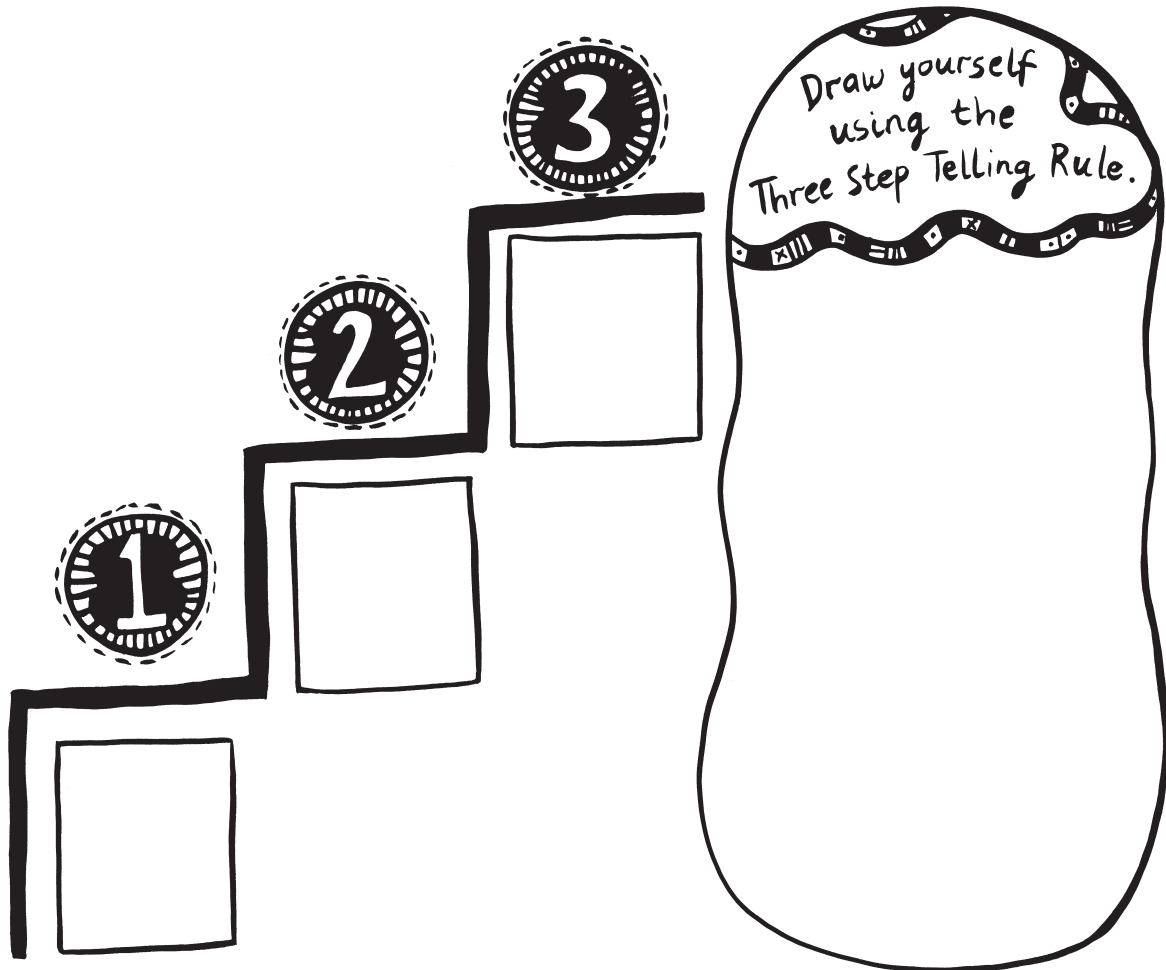
## Coaching tips

- Demonstrating genuine empathy when children come to you in Step 3 of the Telling Rule helps the child to name and understand the problem.
- Remember success comes from rehearsal and repetition of the strategy.
- Encourage the behaviour of a Cool Calm Kid by reminding students to speak clearly, make eye contact, keep still and avoid using mean words.
- Encourage children to visualise their Safety Shield for added confidence.
- Affirm children's attempts when using the strategy.

## Prompt language statement

**1-2-3 yeah, keep your cool, the Three Step Telling Rule keeps me cool.**

# Three Step Telling Rule



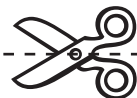
1, 2, 3 yeah, keep your cool, the Three Step Telling Rule ★ keeps me cool.

**Cut and  
paste  
in order  
above.**

I'm going  
now to  
tell the  
teacher.

Stop it,  
I don't  
like it.

Stop it  
now or I'm  
telling the  
teacher.





## Asking an adult for help

### Background information

Many children are reluctant to seek help when experiencing difficulty with their peers. Children need to be in a learning environment that gives the message that it is safe to talk about their problems and ask for help. Even with young children the word ‘tell’ creates alarm and concern as it is often synonymous with dobbing or telling tales and has stigma attached. Using the words ‘talk about it’ removes the stigma and helps the child to feel more comfortable about seeking help.

Make distinctions for the children between telling tales and asking for help.

Telling tales is when:

- it's a small problem
- you can handle the problem yourself
- you want to get the other person into trouble
- sometimes it's really untrue.

Asking an adult for help is when:

- the problem is too big to fix by yourself
- you feel scared and worried about it.

(Suckling & Temple 2001)

Young children do not ask for help from an adult for a variety of reasons. These include:

- fear of reprisal
- thinking it will go away
- being scared and that they will be labelled a dibber-dobber or a baby
- being scared the teacher won't believe them
- being confused and not sure what to say or how to say it
- fear they will be blamed

- feeling embarrassed
- believing they deserve it
- not having the verbal skills or cognitive skills to articulate what has happened.

Provide young children with a variety of ways to seek help from an adult. Encourage them to:

- talk to the teacher in private about it
- take a friend with them
- draw a picture about it
- write the teacher a little letter about it.

## Purpose of lesson

The purpose of this lesson is to coach children in appropriate help-seeking behaviour.

## Learning outcomes

Children make distinctions between telling tales and asking an adult for help when they cannot handle the conflict alone.

Children rehearse how to ask an adult for help like a Cool Calm Kid.

## Requirements for the lesson

Poster 3 (Appendices, page 65), enlarge for classroom use.

## Activities

- 1 Brainstorm a list of people who you can ask for help (record on poster paper and display).
- 2 Brainstorm different ways to ask for help (record on poster paper and display).
- 3 Rehearse a script for children to use when asking for help (see sample below).
- 4 Make puppets to role-play the script (one is the teacher, the other is the child).
- 5 Role-play the script with sharing pairs.
- 6 Make a poster using prompt language statement.

Sample of script

Find adult: *Excuse me Ms/Mr..... Can I speak to you in private?*

State problem: *Mary keeps teasing me about my work.*

Share feelings: *It makes me feel sad and embarrassed.*

Request help: *Can you help me please?*

## Coaching tips

- Create an environment where children feel safe to ask for help free of judgment, ridicule and public display.
- Encourage children to first have a go at working the problem out for themselves.
- Remind children of the differences between telling tales and asking for help.
- Enquire as to how children have been handling the problem.
- Encourage children to speak clearly, calmly and without angry words.
- Assure children you will help them sort out the problem.

## Prompt language statement

**Talk today, help's on the way.**

# The Rap of the Cool Calm Kid

## Background information

The Rap of the Cool Calm Kid has been written to reinforce all the concepts covered in the previous eight lessons. The rap allows children to engage visually, kinaesthetically and in an auditory way. Engaging the senses supports children in retaining the new pro-social skills they have been taught. Like any new skill some children may require three repetitions and another child may require thirty or more repetitions.

Cool Calm Kids is not simply a series of nine lessons delivered via curriculum. It is a process that invites children to change their behaviour by dealing with conflict in a non-aggressive manner. The best way to help children maintain their new pro-social skills is to adopt a seize-the-moment approach, keep the posters on display around the classroom, encourage behaviour change with the prompt language statements and remember to revise, rehearse and revisit again and again and again.

## Purpose of lesson

The purpose of this lesson is to revise the eight lessons in the form of a fun rap.

## Learning outcome

Children recite the Rap of the Cool Calm Kid as a form of revision.

## Requirements for the lesson

Posters 1, 2, 3 and 4 (Appendices, pages 63–66)

Activity Sheet 8 (page 59)

## Activities

- 1** Read and recite The Rap of the Cool Calm Kid and make up body and hand actions to match. Use percussion instruments if available to enhance the activity.
- 2** Children work in pairs or groups to write their own rap about being a Cool Calm Kid.
- 3** Complete Activity Sheet 8.

# The Rap of the Cool Calm Kid

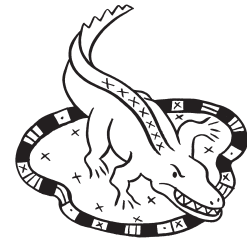
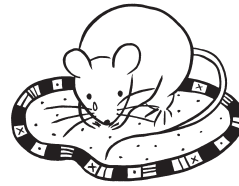
I'm a Cool Calm Kid—THAT'S ME. I'm a Cool Calm Kid—YOU'LL SEE

I won't get mad  
I won't get sad  
Cool as an icy pole  
Calm as a swimming pool  
If things get bad  
I'll tell my dad  
Cool as an icy pole  
Calm as a swimming pool



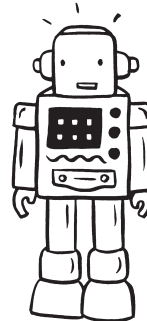
I'm a Cool Calm Kid—THAT'S ME. I'm a Cool Calm Kid—YOU'LL SEE

I don't react  
I think then act  
Cool as an icy pole  
Calm as a swimming pool  
No Angry Alligator  
No Scared Mouse  
Cool as an icy pole  
Calm as a swimming pool



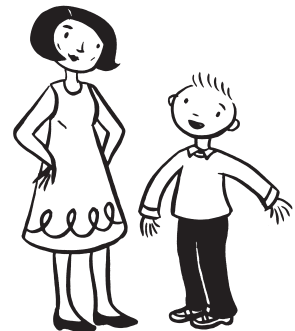
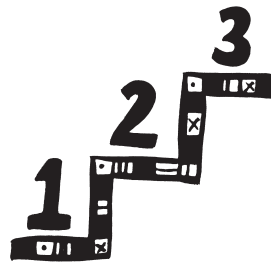
I'm a Cool Calm Kid—THAT'S ME. I'm a Cool Calm Kid—YOU'LL SEE

Out on the footy field  
Strong body, safety shield  
Cool as an icy pole  
Calm as a swimming pool  
Robot voice then ignore  
Walk away—out the door  
Cool as an icy pole  
Calm as a swimming pool



I'm a Cool Calm Kid—THAT'S ME. I'm a Cool Calm Kid—YOU'LL SEE

Three step telling rule  
I will never be a fool  
Cool as an icy pole  
Calm as a swimming pool  
Meanies out met ya  
Talk to the teacher  
Cool as an icy pole  
Calm as a swimming pool



I'm a Cool Calm Kid—THAT'S ME. I'm a Cool Calm Kid—YOU'LL SEE.

Written by Cameron Semmens



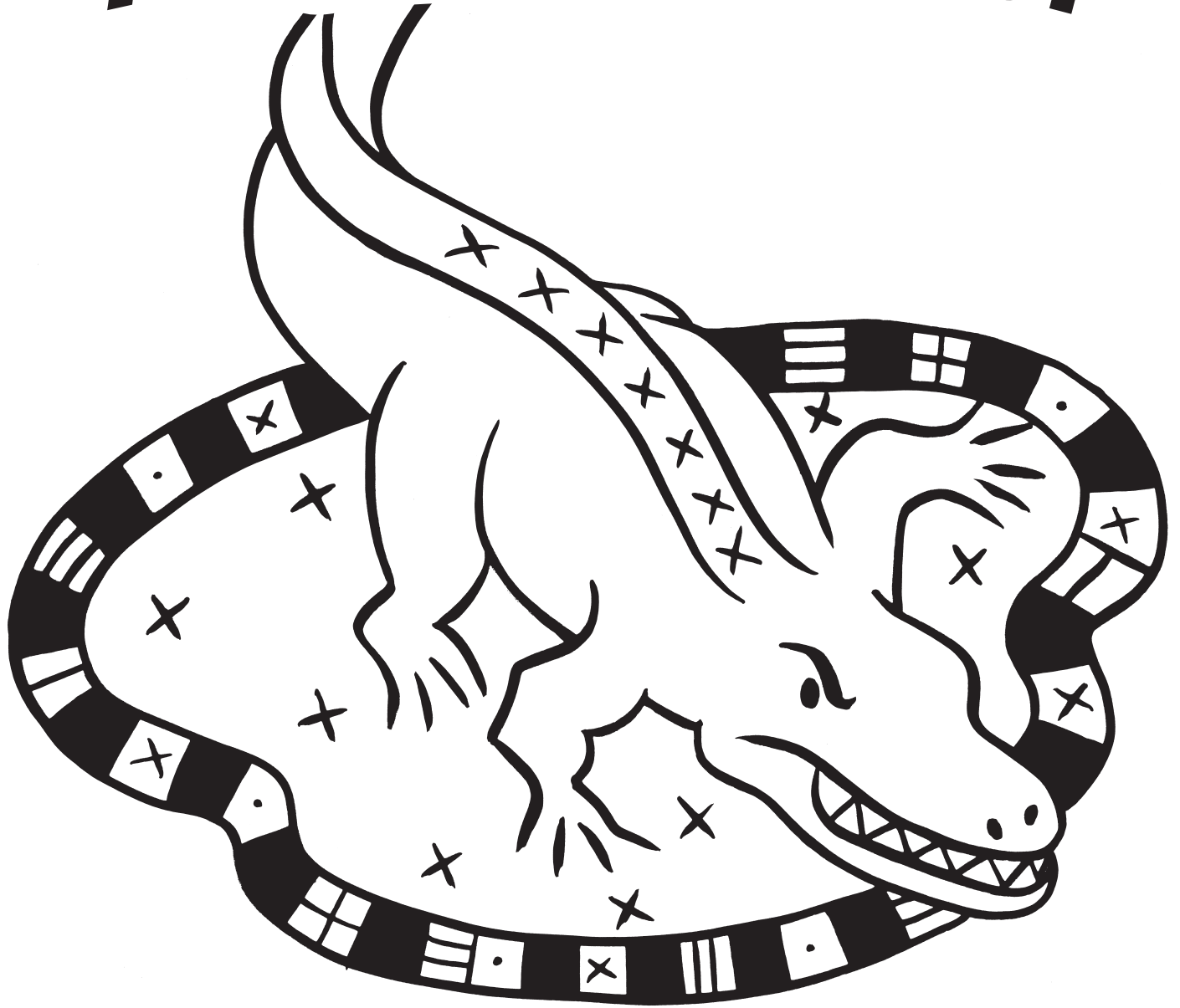


## ppendices





# Don't react like an Angry Alligator



*fight      shout*  
*get mad*

# Don't react like a Scared Mouse



*cry*

*sulk*

*look scared*

# Be a **Cool Calm Kid**



stand tall  
speak clearly  
look at them  
don't use mean words

# Three Step Telling Rule



I'm going  
now to  
tell the  
teacher.



Stop it  
now or I'm  
telling the  
teacher.



Stop it,  
I don't  
like it.

# Congratulations

.....

is awarded the

## Great Mate Certificate.



Congratulations for playing fair  
and showing care.

Teacher: ..... Date: .....

# Congratulations

.....

is awarded the

## Cool Calm Kid Certificate.



Congratulations for managing your  
behaviour by keeping your cool at school.

Teacher: ..... Date: .....

# Bibliography

- Alsaker, FD & Valkanover, S 2001, 'Early diagnosis and prevention of victimization in kindergarten' in J Juvonen & S Graham (eds), *Peer harassment in school*, Guilford Press, New York, pp. 175–95.
- Antidote 2003, *The emotional literacy handbook*, David Fulton Publishers, London.
- Batchelor, D & Taylor, H 2005, 'Social inclusion—the next step: user friendly strategies to promote social interaction and peer acceptance of children with disabilities', *Australian Journal of Early Childhood*, vol. 5, pp. 10–18.
- Brooks, R & Goldstein, S 2006, 'Risks, resilience and futurists: the changing lives of our children', *Education Horizons*, vol. 9, n.3, pp. 14–15.
- Brunskill, K 2006, *Learning to be confident, determined and caring*, Paul Chapman Publishing, London.
- Crone, DA & Horner, RH 2003, *Building positive behaviour support systems in schools*, Guilford Press, New York.
- Dryfoos, J 1990, 'Adolescents at risk: A summary of work in the field—programs and policies', in DE Rogers & E Ginzberg (eds), *Adolescents at risk: Medical and social perspectives*, Westview Press, San Francisco, pp. 128–40.
- Durlack, JA & Wells, AM 1997, 'Primary prevention health programs for children and adolescents: A meta-analytical review', *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 25 (2), pp. 115–52.
- Freed, A & Whitworth, K 2003, 'Socially speaking... not always an easy task!', *Learning Links New*, n.2, pp. 1–4.
- George, H 1999, 'The role of animals in the emotional and moral development of children' in F R Ascione & P Arkow (eds), *Child abuse, domestic violence, and animal abuse: Linking the circles of compassion for prevention and intervention*, Purdue University Press, Indiana, pp. 380–92.
- Goleman, D 1996, *Emotional intelligence*, Bloomsbury Publishing, London.
- Greenberg, MT, Domitrovich, C & Bumbarger, B 2001, 'The prevention of mental disorders in school-aged children: Current state of the field', *Prevention and Treatment*, 4, Article 1. Retrieved May 8, 2005, from <<http://journals.apa.org/prevention/volume4/pre0040001a.html>>
- Greenberg, MT, Weissberg, R, O'Brien, M, Zins, J, Fredericks, L, Resnik, H & Elias, M 2003, 'Enhancing school-based prevention and youth development through coordinated social, emotional, and academic learning', *American Psychologist*, 58, pp. 466–74.
- Harvey, S 2005, 'Emotional intelligence: the classroom story', *Teacher*, n.155, pp.20–2.
- Herron, R & Peter, VJ 1998, *A good friend*, Boys Town Press, Nebraska.



- Howarth, R & Fisher, P 2005, *Emotional and behavioural difficulties*, Continuum International Publishing Group, London.
- Kaiser, B & Sklar Rasminsky, J 2007, *Challenging behaviour in young children*, 2nd edn, Pearson Education Inc, Boston.
- Kochenderfer, BJ & Ladd, GW 1996, 'Peer Victimization: Cause or Consequence of School Maladjustment', *Child Development*, 67, pp. 1305–17.
- Main, N 1999, 'Children's Perception of violence in early childhood', paper presented at the Children and Crime: Victims' and Offenders' Conference. Australian Institute of Criminology, Brisbane, 17–18 June.
- McGrath, H & Noble, T (eds) 2006, *Bullying solutions*, Pearson Australia Group, Frenchs Forest, NSW.
- Murdoch, K & Wilson, J 2004, *How to succeed with cooperative learning*, Curriculum Corporation, Carlton.
- Paterson, K 2005, *55 teaching dilemmas*, Pembroke Publishers, Ontario.
- Peterson, L 2002, *Social savvy*, rev. ed., ACER Press, Melbourne.
- Rigby, K 2002a, *A meta-evaluation of methods and approaches to reducing bullying in pre-schools and early primary school in Australia*, Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department, Canberra.
- Rigby, K 2002b, *New perspectives on bullying*, Jessica Kingsley Publishers, London.
- Rigby, K 2007, *Bullying in schools and what to do about it*, rev. ed., ACER Press, Melbourne.
- Schaefer, CE & DiGeronimo, TF 2000, *Ages and stages*, John Wiley and Sons, Canada.
- Schroeder, A 1996, *Socially speaking*, LDA, Abbeygate House, Cambridge.
- Seligman, MEP 1991, *Learned optimism*, Random House Australia, Milsons Point, New South Wales.
- Stroyan, L 2004, 'Empathic discipline', *Gifted*, n.132, pp. 26–9.
- Suckling, A & Temple, C 2001, *Bullying: a whole school approach*, ACER Press, Melbourne.
- Thompson, K & Gullone, E 2003, 'Promotion of empathy and pro-social behaviour in children through humane education', *Australian Psychologist*, vol. 38, n.3, pp. 175–82.
- Thompson, M, O'Neill Grace, C & Cohen, LJ 2001, *Best friends, worst enemies*, Ballantine Publishing Group, United States of America.
- Twemlow, S & Sacco, F 2006, 'Creating a peaceful school learning environment: critical elements for change', paper presented at the Freud Conference, Melbourne, 26–27 May.
- Warden, D & Christie, D 1997, *Teaching social behaviour*, David Fulton Publishers, London.
- Weare, K 2004, *Developing the emotionally literate school*, Paul Chapman Publishing, London.

This great new book aims to help young children explore better ways to handle conflict and bossy classmates. It follows on from the authors' successful book *Bullying: A whole-school approach* and provides guidance, resources and activities for teachers and parents.

*Cool Calm Kids* helps children from Prep to Year 2 explore better ways to deal with conflict and bossy behaviour in a fun and energetic environment through role-play and participation. It helps to develop social skills, body awareness and appropriate language early in a child's life. Students will discover a common language which they can use to deal with friendship issues, and learn to handle peer pressure through non-violent strategies that are aligned with the ethos of the school.

#### ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Amelia Suckling and Carla Temple are experienced Special Education Consultants and authors of the well-known Bully-Busters® program. They regularly run courses and workshops on anti-bullying practices for schools and kindergartens.

ISBN 978-0-86431-848-0



9 780864 318480